92/80
C

CALIFORNIA STATE ARCHIVES
STATE GOVERNMENT ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH
ROBERT WILLIAMS

OFFICE OF
MARCH FONG EU
SECRETARY OF STATE

92/80
C

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

ROBERT WILLIAMS

Deputy Legislative Secretary, 1963-1988

April 5 and May 9, 1990
Sacramento, California

By Ann Lage
Regional Oral History Office
University of California, Berkeley

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None.

LITERARY RIGHTS AND QUOTATIONS

This manuscript is hereby made available for research purposes only. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the California State Archivist or Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to:

California State Archives
1020 O Street, Room 130
Sacramento, California 95814

or

Regional Oral History Office
486 Library
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

The request should include information of the specific passages and identification of the user.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Robert Williams, Oral History Interview, Conducted 1990 by Ann Lage, Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

March Fong Eu
Secretary of State

California State Archives
1020 O Street, Room 130
Sacramento, CA 95814

Information (916) 4
Document Restoration (916) 4
Exhibit Hall (916) 4
Legislative Bill Service (916) 4
(prior years)

PREFACE

On September 25, 1985, Governor George Deukmejian signed into law A.B. 2104 (Chapter 965 of the Statutes of 1985). This legislation established, under the administration of the California State Archives, a State Government Oral History Program "to provide through the use of oral history a continuing documentation of state policy development as reflected in California's legislative and executive history."

The following interview is one of a series of oral histories undertaken for inclusion in the state program. These interviews offer insights into the actual workings of both the legislative and executive processes and policy mechanisms. They also offer an increased understanding of the men and women who create legislation and implement state policy. Further, they provide an overview of issue development in California state government and of how both the legislative and executive branches of government deal with issues and problems facing the state.

Interviewees are chosen primarily on the basis of their contributions to and influence on the policy issues of the state of California. They include members of the legislative and executive branches of state government as well as legislative staff, advocates, members of the media, and other people who played significant roles in specific issue areas of major and continuing importance to California.

By authorizing the California State Archives to work cooperatively with oral history units at California colleges and universities to conduct interviews, this program is structured to take advantage of the resources and expertise in oral history available through California's several institutionally based programs.

Participating as cooperating institutions in the State Government Oral History Program are:

Oral History Program
History Department
California State University, Fullerton

Oral History Program
Center for California Studies
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Program
Claremont Graduate School
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

The establishment of the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program marks one of the most significant commitments made by any state toward the preservation and documentation of its governmental history. It supplements the often fragmentary historical written record by adding an organized primary source, enriching the historical information available on given topics and allowing for more thorough historical analysis. As such, the program, through the preservation and publication of interviews such as the one which follows, will be of lasting value to current and future generations of scholars, citizens, and leaders.

John F. Burns
State Archivist

July 27, 1988

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERVIEW HISTORY i

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY ii

SESSION 1, April 5, 1990

[Tape 1, Side A] 1

Education and family background--Work with the Legal Division of the Department of Transportation--Temporary work in Governor Pat Brown's office, 1963--Governor's office practice of borrowing employees from other departments--Paul Ward, Frank Mesplé, and Gino Lera and the evolution of a system for executive branch representation in the legislature, under Governor Pat Brown.

[Tape 1, Side B] 14

Final years of the Brown administration--Transition to the Reagan governorship--Legislative secretaries Vern Sturgeon, Jack Lindsay, George Steffes--Initial personnel disruptions in the new administration --Legislative review process in Reagan administration--CEQA and the supreme court's interpretation--Wild and Scenic Rivers Act--Decision making process for Reagan's action on legislation.

[Tape 2, Side A] 28

Custodian for Governor Reagan's enrolled bill files--Handling routine legislation--Assessment of Governor Reagan's style, comparisons with other governors--Working to ensure good legislation--Signing the Beilenson abortion bill.

[Tape 2, Side B] 43

Welfare reform legislation--Legislative overrides of governors' vetoes and appointments--Anticipating court action on legislation--Reagan and environmental legislation--Mental health legislation--Changes during the Reagan administration--Working with agencies and departments--Formalizing the legislative review process.

[Tape 3, Side A] 58

Format and procedures: colored papers, pocket vetoes, workload, emergency letters--Dealing with legislators and legislative staff--Pat Brown's style.

SESSION 2, May 9, 1990

[Tape 4, Side A] 65

President pro tem Hugh Burns as acting governor--Mike Curb and the lieutenant governor's right to stand in for the governor--Hugh Burns, Jesse Unruh, and an untimely adjournment of the assembly--Early days of the Jerry Brown administration: lack of schedule, concern with details of legislation--Brown's close ties with his staff--Tony Kline, Gray Davis--Working in an unstructured setting--Legislative secretaries Paul Halvonik and Marc Poché.

[Tape 4, Side B] 80

More on Jerry Brown's staff--Division of labor with Gino Lera--Marc Poché and Rose Bird's style as agency secretary--Keeper of the popcorn machine in the Jerry Brown administration--Guaranteed chaos on the first budget bill--Jerry Brown's process for signing or vetoing legislation, role of the director of Finance--Getting a feel for Brown's concerns.

[Tape 5, Side A] 94

Changes in media coverage of Sacramento--More on Brown's approach to legislation and appointments--Dick Silberman as chief of staff--Computergate, political activities in the governor's office, and Brown's response--Dealing with the Fair Political Practices Commission--Brown's response to the medfly--Other legislative unit staff--Final thoughts on Jerry Brown--Changes under the Deukmejian administration.

[Tape 5, Side B] 109

Work habits and personalities in the governor's office--Importance of Deukmejian's senior staff in decision making--Thoughts on Deukmejian's style and concerns--Changes in balance of power between the governor and the legislature--State Uniform Laws Commission--Turning down a judgeship--Current of-counsel position in political law firm.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer/Editor

Ann Lage
Senior Editor, University of California at Berkeley State Archives
State Government Oral History Program
M.A. University of California, Berkeley (History)
B.A. University of California, Berkeley (History)

Interview Time and Place

April 5, 1990
Office of Robert Williams, Sacramento, California
Session of two and one-half hours

May 9, 1990
Office of Robert Williams, Sacramento, California
Session of two hours

Editing

The interviewer/editor checked the verbatim manuscript of the interview against the original tape recordings; edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling; verified proper names and prepared footnotes.

On September 2, 1990, Mr. Williams was sent the edited transcript for his approval. He returned it with minor corrections.

The interviewer/editor prepared the introductory materials.

Papers

Mr. Williams has no papers relevant to his career as legislative secretary, but he does serve as the custodian for the enrolled bill files of the Ronald Reagan gubernatorial administration in the California State Archives.

Tapes and Interview Records

The original tape recordings of the interviews are in The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley. Records relating to the interview are at the Regional Oral History Office. Master tapes are deposited in the California State Archives.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Robert Williams was born August 7, 1928, in Sacramento, California. He received his primary, secondary, and undergraduate education in Sacramento, graduating from Sacramento State College with a major in government in 1950. He pursued graduate studies in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, and earned his law degree in 1960 from McGeorge School of Law at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California.

Beginning in 1961, Mr. Williams was an attorney for the legal division of the Department of Public Works (later Department of Transportation) for the State of California. While still employed by that division, he was borrowed by the office of Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr., beginning in 1963 as a deputy legislative secretary. First on an occasional basis, and then full time, he served in this capacity under four governors until his retirement from state service in December 1988.

Since 1989, Mr. Williams has been an attorney in an of-counsel capacity in the Sacramento office of the political law firm, Nielsen, Merksamer, Hodgson, Parrinello and Mueller.

[Session 1, April 25, 1990]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

LAGE: We are going to start with some personal background. I know you grew up in Sacramento.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I'm a native son, been here for virtually all my life except for a period of time, two years in the service and time at the University of California at Berkeley.

LAGE: That's where you went to undergraduate school?

WILLIAMS: No, I did graduate work there in Public Administration.

LAGE: I see.

WILLIAMS: And I graduated from Sacramento State [College] in the early years of the campus, among the first graduating classes, in 1950--that's not the first, but it's close to it--in Public Administration. And went to local schools, and went to McGeorge Law School [University of the Pacific] after I came back from the service and started working for the State Personnel Board.

LAGE: Was McGeorge an evening program?

WILLIAMS: It was an evening program exclusively at that time. I started in 1956, graduated in 1960, took the bar exam and passed it in the same year in 1960, and went to work for the then Division of Contracts and Rights-of-Way of the then Department of Public Works, which is now the legal division of the Department of Transportation.

LAGE: I see.

WILLIAMS: The role hasn't changed but the names have.

LAGE: Just to back up into family more. Was your family involved in state service, your parents?

WILLIAMS: Yes. My father for part of his life was a state policeman. My parents divorced when I was a teenager, and he went his way, and my mother worked as a clerical employee for the state and retired from the state. Both are dead.

LAGE: So when you grow up in Sacramento . . .

WILLIAMS: That's not unusual.

LAGE: . . . do you kind of think of going to work for the state?

WILLIAMS: Well, when you. . . . I certainly did. My wife [Carol], who was a bus. ad. [business administration] graduate at Cal [University of California, Berkeley] at a time when very few women went into bus. ad., I'll tell you, went to work for the state as what they called an administrative trainee--I did too--and was entry level for liberal arts graduates in a variety of fields. She worked for the Board of Equalization as a management analyst. The titles have changed over the years. When the children were born, she stayed at home. So we both have the same kind of. . . . If you were looking for employment, the state was really one of the better employers in Sacramento, certainly at the time we were in the job market initially.

LAGE: There wasn't a lot else, I guess.

WILLIAMS: There wasn't much else. The state offered a degree of security. It offered some opportunities for advancement. For somebody who is kind of--I'm trying to describe myself delicately--you know, very conservative about my own lifestyle--in terms of taking risks and things like that I tend to be very cautious--it seemed to be the proper thing. I have not regretted the decision; it was a normal thing to do for a Sacramentan, less so for anybody else. I think in the Bay Area or in Los Angeles, state service is just one of the incidental employers in the area.

LAGE: So the halls must be filled with a lot of Sacramentans.

WILLIAMS: Yes, well, at one time Sacramentans were known to each other. I know of attorneys who said they could go into a court room and not only would they know the other attorney, they would know--there's

a panel of jurors--they might know many of the jurors, just because the community was so small in the prewar years. And that's not too long ago. It's small town, and it's sort of still a small town in many respects. Much of what you see around here in the immediate area still represents old Sacramento: the Greyhound Bus depot and some of the older buildings.

LAGE: Right, even though this building doesn't.

WILLIAMS: This is a new building, of course, and the Renaissance Tower is virtually unoccupied; it's a new building. The city has changed. The population has grown dramatically. The downtown is the typical almost-abandoned-at-times downtown. So it's changed. I'm not sure the early days were good old days, but the life was a little simpler then.

LAGE: Well, that gives us a little sense of how you got to where you started in the legal division.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it's not an unnatural thing. I had a lot of friends who went out and tried other kinds of employment and migrated to state service because there were perhaps more opportunities for them long term, and I think that's proven to be the case.

LAGE: OK. Now in the legal division, as it's known now, of the Department of Transportation, is there any aspect of your job there that we should talk about that maybe was reflected later?

WILLIAMS: Well, I went to work in the legal division in 1961, when I left the Personnel Board after I passed the bar exam, and that division as it was constituted then and as it's constituted now does a variety of legal tasks. We're like the attorney general's office in that we represent our employer, the Department of Transportation, in every legal matter, whether it be in the superior court in condemnation proceedings; relating to the acquisition of property; or suits against the department for dangerous and defective conditions of property, which are commonplace under tort liability law; contract disputes, both in administrative hearings and in the courts. We pursue the matters in the appellate courts. So we

represent the department fully both in the trial court and the appellate court. Most departments don't do that. We have sort of a unique kind of arrangement though.

LAGE: And this was the kind of work you were doing?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I was involved in a variety of tasks involving condemnation. Utility relocations were always, you know, crossing somebody's aqueduct or pipeline or waterway, and whether it be Farmer Brown or a small irrigation district or the telephone company or PG&E [Pacific Gas and Electric Company] we had, we worked with them and when we couldn't agree we sometimes got into court; but most of the time it was a matter of negotiating out differences, and that's what we did. So it was a variety of legal tasks both in court or out of court.

LAGE: And you were there how long? Just a couple of years?

WILLIAMS: Well, no, I never left the department. That confuses people. I retired from the Department of Transportation. But starting in '63, when I went over to the governor's office on my first sojourn over there in July of '63, I was regularly employed in the legal division, and for a brief period I worked over in the governor's office for the end of that session. The tendency is--and it still is true--the work load is greatest at the end of the legislative session. It's not spread out through the whole year.

LAGE: At the end of the session, when you're analyzing the bills that have . . .

WILLIAMS: That have gone to the governor. A disproportionate number of bills pass in the last few weeks of each session. It's still as true today as it was in 1963, unfortunately. The two-year cycle that was approved by the voters in '66 has not. . . . No, it's later than that, I'm sorry. That was still a one-year cycle.

The two-year session became effective in '73, and it hasn't proven to be as workable as everyone hoped. Human tendencies are to put things off. They're doing that right now. We're now

hearing bills that could have been heard earlier in the year. But if I were a member, I'd be doing the same thing.

LAGE: So you went in temporarily originally.

WILLIAMS: Yes, so I went over there to assist one of the fellow employees in the office, Warren Marsden, who just passed away, unfortunately. Warren was an attorney in our office, one of our senior people, who worked over in the governor's office. And I knew he did, because I never saw Warren during the busy period, and everybody said, "He's over in the governor's office doing something." And I never knew precisely what Warren did, but I knew he wasn't in our office. During that period he was always gone. So Warren had prior experience for the legislative counsel's office and then used to go over during the session and help the governor's office. That's about all I knew at the moment. Warren called me one day and said, "I've talked to my superiors," and asked me if I'd be willing to come over and help him with the crunch at the end of the session. And I said, "I'd be happy to do whatever I could," not knowing a thing about what he did.

LAGE: Which doesn't seem like it was similar to what you did in the legal division.

WILLIAMS: Well, that's right, but here he was, he was from the legal division, and I figured, well, I could provide some assistance, although I certainly didn't have any expertise in legislative matters. I knew where the capitol was.

LAGE: That helps.

WILLIAMS: So at least I knew how to get there. So I said I'd be happy to do it. It was a new experience and one that seemed to be worthy of note.

What Warren had done and what had been done for a period of years, they'd bring together a number of attorneys from state agencies--including Warren Marsden, people from the attorney general's office, and other state agencies--they bring them together at the end of the session, and they would provide input on bills that were before the governor. There were drawers full of them. You

try to look in the file and see what information was already in there that had been gathered about the bill and write an analysis of the bill: how it changed the law, who was for it and who was against it, with a recommendation of sign or veto, and then on to Warren. Warren would then send it on to the legislative secretary, who then would make a final recommendation and send it on to Governor [Edmund G.] Brown [Sr.].

LAGE: Now, on what basis would you make a recommendation on something like that?

WILLIAMS: Based on the material in the file or whatever expertise you might have, or what you think you had. Now I'm not saying that the premise that you can put a bunch of lawyers in one room and they can come out with all sorts of intelligent appraisals of the bill may be a little faulty. But some people did have a body of knowledge they brought to the job. Others had less and some more, and you tried your best relying on the information that was in the file. You just didn't look at a bill and say, "Now I'll make a judgment about it." In fact, I can show you. . . . I've kept a couple of files here to show you.

LAGE: Oh, good.

WILLIAMS: These are from [Governor Ronald] Reagan years, because I'm the custodian of the Reagan files, and they wouldn't give me a Brown, Sr., file to bring to you. [Laughter] So then the governor would take some action on the bill. In those days he could either sign the bill or he could pocket veto it at the end of the session. In those days you still had pocket vetoes. I never knew what happened, and I just sat in this big room. It was like a boiler operation, you know: a lot of desks in a row, and we worked like crazy, and people would pick up your work and type it and bring it back, and you'd check it, and it would go on to Warren, and Warren, I think, locked us in the room.

LAGE: [Laughter] There were a lot of you, it sounds like.

WILLIAMS: Yes, there were a lot of us, several of us. John Fourt from the attorney general's office was there, and John and I worked together. In fact, a number of people did this during their years that they worked in the attorney general's office. [John] Foran, who just retired from the senate, did this one session, so there's a variety of people coming from the AG's [attorney general's] office and from other state agencies' legal offices. Warren Marsden just happened to come from the legal division and was sort of running it; he was sort of supervising and overseeing the operation.

So at the end of the session, it was over with. This was 1963, which was a regular session, a heavy volume of bills, probably over two thousand bills for the governor to act on, and the following year would be a budget session with a special session tacked onto it to take care of things that couldn't wait another year. Warren had left the employ of the Department of Transportation, then Public Works, and went to work for BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit] as one of their attorneys. BART was coming into being, or was in being, and he left Public Works, now Caltrans [California Department of Transportation], and so somebody said, "Would you like to stay on in the '64 session?" So John Fourt and I--John worked in the AG's office--we sort of were there during the easy budget session.

LAGE: Full time?

WILLIAMS: No, no. Just now and again.

LAGE: Now and again, when they needed you?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and that was true in '63. I was there for that brief, abrupt, short period to get the work done, and then I came back to work. In '64 it was much the same thing because at that point in time it was an easier session, and you had a budget to worry about, which was minor, and special items that the governor could place before the legislature in extraordinary session so they can consider matters that couldn't wait another year. It was amazing we could get by with a regular session every other year. It became obvious in '66

before we went to the annual session that we were just adding multitudes of subjects to the call, and trying to shoehorn bills into calls that were already there so the legislature could get things done that had to be addressed that particular year.

LAGE: So in effect it was almost a regular session.

WILLIAMS: It became a regular session in '66 plus an election year, which compounded the difficulty, but not the work load that you found in '63 or '65 or any of the odd-numbered years. Sixty-seven started up a rather steady flow of work on an annual basis, and it seemed to go on interminably.

LAGE: Now when did you actually get in there full time?

WILLIAMS: Well, I got in there full time. . . . I tried not to be full time, because I saw it as short-term employment, and I wanted to keep my ties with my principal employer. So I tried to always be available for anything they had to do. If there was a condemnation case that I could get ready for in incidental time, I would do that, because if I cut myself off too much there were a lot of downsides to it. I perceived a major downside in that I didn't think Warren, who did an excellent job in the governor's office, was that much admired over in my office, because he was away. And the people who can use your services find you're always away--out of sight, out of mind kind of thing. I found that to be a very real problem. The more time I spent away, the less respected, loved, and admired I was over in the legal division.

LAGE: Sure.

WILLIAMS: So it became a difficult problem. It was a problem for him [Warren Marsden]. I don't think he ever realized it, but I think that people just didn't find it. . . . He had another role, and they had no control over it. And that's just like an employee that just disappears.

LAGE: But who's paying the salary?

WILLIAMS: The department was.

LAGE: The department continues to pay the salary? And doesn't get reimbursed?

WILLIAMS: Doesn't get reimbursed. And as a result. . . . This was a practice that went on a lot in the governor's office: you borrowed people. They had these deputy directors who would come in and work full time in the governor's office. Frank [A.] Chambers, for example, who later went to BART, was a deputy director, I think, of Public Works, and Frank was one of the governor's confidants on legislative matters. A very knowledgeable, bright person. And his principal role was in the governor's office. Deputy directors from other departments like DMV [Department of Motor Vehicles] would spend a lot of time. This is not only with Pat Brown, but his predecessors, who would be available as ad hoc employees of the governor's office but never on the payroll.

That changed when some legislators started complaining that the governor seemed to have this gang of employees over there on loan, namely--it didn't center on us--but some members felt that Gino Lera and myself, who worked in the legislative unit virtually full time, should be employees of the governor's office and not be loaned from either Department of Finance or, in my case, Public Works. During the Reagan administration, [Edwin] Ed Meese [III] agreed with the legislative concern and agreed that the loaned employee's department should be compensated for any services rendered. He agreed that was appropriate and proper. At that point, early in the Reagan administration--I can't tell you precisely when--we, at the request of the legislators and some legislative pressure, I went on a contract basis so the department was compensated for my services full time.

LAGE: But you still maintained your ties?

WILLIAMS: No, no. This is the point when I stayed full time over at the governor's office. So there was a considerable period when I was. . . . As soon as the session was over, a secretary who came from my office and I would just barge out of there, you know, and tried to get back to the regular work. Then as it became more and more full time, early in the Reagan years, you couldn't do that.

You just had to spend all of your time there, because the session didn't end. It seemed to go almost. . . . It went into Christmas sometimes, because bills became effective ninety days after they passed, not on January 1. So it didn't matter when you quit, you just kept going.

So when I got into that position where I was working full time in the governor's office, then we contracted for the service. And it just coincided that the legislative demand occurred about that time, and the legislative concern that the governors over the years have been using all these people, and the legislature really had no sense of the enormity of the size of the governor's office, because all of these people they knew personally and liked they knew darn well didn't work for the governor. [Laughter]

LAGE: But were always hanging around.

WILLIAMS: Hanging around and they're always there, and they knew they were the governor's spokesperson on one issue or another.

So at that point both Gino and I were--I think Gino had already become a governor's office employee. I was the one that went back and forth. It was difficult for him to do it. That's how it ended. So when I retired, I retired from the Department of Transportation legal division, and the department had been reimbursed on a contract basis for several years of service by the governor's office. I did that through choice, because I thought there was some advantage to me, and I think there was. [Interruption]

LAGE: When Warren Marsden went to BART, he seemed to be sort of a head honcho in this delegation.

WILLIAMS: Yes, he was sort of the overseer of this process, and he'd been doing it for several years. I can't tell you how many, but Warren was a fixture there and worked for the legislative secretary, who I knew existed but had never seen. You know, it's one of those operations where you were locked in a room and did your job. In '64, being a lighter bill activity year, John Fourt and I worked

together sort of overseeing things, not in charge of anything, but worked for Paul Ward who was the then legislative secretary, and then following Paul was Frank Mesplé. Frank unfortunately passed away not too many years ago.

LAGE: We had an interview that we had done several years ago with him.[1]

WILLIAMS: Yes, he was an incredible person: bright and witty and just one of the sharpest people I've ever dealt with, and always alluded to his early days in Clovis and his farm background. He liked to pretend he was a farm boy, which was always humorous, because he was very urbane and his family was very bright, the whole bunch of them. So it was just a delight to be around him. He was a remarkable person. Unfortunately, I think his later years were not pleasant ones because of poor health and some family problems that were distressing to me. But a truly remarkable person. Paul in the same category. Paul has suffered from ill health as well. He represented the California Hospital Association for several years after leaving the governor's office.

LAGE: Did either of those men change the operation that you were involved with?

WILLIAMS: Well, I think it was evolving. I sense from an early. . . . I worked with an employee in the governor's office who had been there forty years when she retired, and she reminded me quite forcibly, said, "You know, we used to do all the bills. Two of us used to do all the bills that came to the governor"--Governor [Earl G.] Warren and succeeding governors---"and I don't know why it takes you so many people and so much equipment," and on and on and on and on. And I thought, "Well, it's probably true that while they had a volume of bills, things were a little simpler." I think the world has become a little more complicated, and the subject of the bills are a little more complicated. I'm not asserting they didn't do anything

---

1. Frank Mesplé, "From Clovis to the Capitol: Building a Career as a Legislative Liaison," in *The Governor's Office under Edmund G. Brown, Sr.*, Regional Oral History Office, 1981.

but an adequate job, but she told me that she could do it with a lot less people than I did.

LAGE: One of the articles I read, I think in *California Journal,*[1] implied that this was a period when they were centralizing things in the governor's office that maybe had been done in the departments before.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and I think that's what was happening. There was a lot more freedom in the departments and a little more freewheeling. That's alluded to in the article that I gave you that you already had. The departments probably have never stopped freewheeling totally, but there's at least a color of order and process today. But you can still, you know, handle that problem if you're effective before the legislature. You can use other mechanisms. I'm not asserting it's done regularly, but, you know, it's just . . .

LAGE: It happens.

WILLIAMS: It's still human beings in this process who may see virtue in doing something even though they don't have full approval to do it. But I think that we saw the beginnings of a more formal process of executive branch representation in the legislature during the Brown years, probably not as organized. It started in the Brown, Sr., administration. Gino Lera was a principal craftsman of this process. Both of us worked on, you know, a process of sorts to try to get insights from our departments on pending bills, and we met regularly with the legislative secretary and Hale Champion, who was the then director of Finance and who played a very significant role in the administration. I don't mean to give people titles, but if there was a person who was close to the governor, it certainly was Hale, and he was more than just the director of Finance.

So we spent a lot of time with him going over bills that were pending that were significant issues and the like, and we could get marching orders from him. The departments in turn could get

---

1. Bruce Keppel, "Executive Agencies Before the Legislature," *California Journal* (December 1972): 356-359.

marching orders from him. So we had a regular process of review with the legislative secretary and Hale Champion. It wasn't a cabinet operation or anything like that. All input was coming from the then fledgling agency secretaries, where you didn't have every director pounding on the governor's door. You had some effort to cut some of that down, not totally satisfactory to anyone, but the agencies had been created, and he had one for business that he had informally created, and that became full blown in the Reagan years, with the agency secretaries covering each and every department that was under the governor's wing.

LAGE: And then would you work through the agency's legislative person or with the department?

WILLIAMS: Yes, you'd go through the agencies to the department. That's how it ultimately developed. When you have agencies in place, you have the people in place. You then have coordinators who then handle their departments and the work flows up through the agency to the governor's office, to the agency, back to the departments.

LAGE: Now, who was sort of the brain behind developing this flow?

WILLIAMS: Well, Gino Lera was a systems person from [the Department of] Finance and [the Department of] General Services, because some of the systems stuff went to General Services. So he was the organizer, the idea person. He still is, by the way. He's retired but still works part time for [the Department of] Health Services. He's a person of uncanny ability. I don't have that skill. I'm a good traffic cop, and I'm a good mechanic, but he's an idea person. He really can make things go and develop concepts and get them down and make it work. So we worked well together because he had that talent, and I could make sure that the work got done.

LAGE: Did he stay on through the four administrations?

WILLIAMS: No, he didn't. He stayed on through. . . . Well, maybe I should back up and go through how we transitioned into the Reagan years, because both of us were in a slightly different position. They were

looking out for Gino's interest because I had a job. I think Gino had gone to work for the governor's office, so they put him back into Finance so he wouldn't be hurled out when a new governor came, and obviously there was every likelihood that Governor Brown would not be in office in '67. So it was a very difficult time and an unpleasant year as far as I recall. It wasn't a happy one for the governor because of the infighting that was going on between he and the assembly leadership, namely [Speaker of the Assembly] Jesse [M.] Unruh. So that was going on plus the campaign.

LAGE: I'm wondering if we should talk more about the Brown years before we move into the Reagan, because you keep bringing up these things that you may have observed that wouldn't be general knowledge.

WILLIAMS: Sure. Well, let's stick with the Brown years. This is an observation that I had that things seemed to be--as the year progressed, '66, the election year--the governor was getting as many broadsides and bombshells from Jesse Unruh and people in the assembly leadership as he was getting from Ronald Reagan, candidate for governor. It just made it very difficult for the governor to function before the legislature, because Jesse Unruh felt that the governor . . .

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

LAGE: Unruh felt Brown had reneged?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and that's public knowledge. You read about that all the time. I just knew as an employee or someone on the scene that things were very tense and very difficult. Dealings with the legislature were difficult.

LAGE: Would that affect anything about the way you did your . . . ?

WILLIAMS: No, it was just a reality that this wasn't going to be the year where you got things done.

LAGE: Right.

WILLIAMS: The governor got a lot of things done in his first term, and as the second term goes along, for a variety of reasons, you become lame duck. If you are one it gets more difficult. Here you have a person who Jesse Unruh had hoped would be a lame duck and wasn't and took him on, and so you had a difficult year with a very powerful legislator making life miserable for the governor and an up-and-coming candidate on the Republican side who was making life miserable.

And I had a sense that things were just totally, you know, unpleasant for the governor for those reasons. He not only had to fend off Jesse Unruh and his own people, now he's got Ronald Reagan blazing away at him and obviously with great success. So '66 was not one of your banner years for, it wouldn't have been for legislation anyhow, and it wasn't. And I sensed, just rereading some old material--in fact, the one piece I'd showed you--that it just wasn't. . . . Frank Mesplé mentioned that things weren't going as well in the second term, and that's certainly true. A lot of things got done in the first term. It got more difficult with the passage of time and because of these other things.

LAGE: But in analyzing a bill, does politics enter into what you do?

WILLIAMS: No.

LAGE: Any kind of conflict with Unruh or . . .

WILLIAMS: No. I always figured there was somebody else who can take care of that problem, and that's what you've got to do. Nobody is totally immune to bias and some deep-seated feelings, and you try to minimize that.

Most bills are not very exciting. There is a feeling that everything the governor sees has some deep political implication. There are many bills in that category, but most are housekeeping bills. How do you keep all the Fresno irrigation district functioning, changing the membership of the board of directors, how they hold elections, things like that. And every district does this. Should the clerk typist II in the Fresno municipal court district receive X

dollars as opposed to Y dollars? Well, every district has to send a bill in to adjust the salaries of court employees; that's under the constitution. So you've got all of these bills that are not earthshaking but necessary to make government function--at least everybody thinks they're necessary--and that's the good part of the work load for a governor. The number of truly exciting and truly major bills are relatively few, in any year.

LAGE: And yet you have to give attention to the small ones, too.

WILLIAMS: And you've got to do it all within the time frames that are accorded the governor to take action. So '66 was not a regular session year, so there wasn't a tremendous workload. Had it been a regular session year, if you had had a regular session in an even-numbered year, it would have been I think even more difficult. But it was just difficult for the governor. He was.... I can recall one occasion when I went over with bills, went [to the governor's office] with Frank Mesplé and Gino and others, and went over bills, and he said, "This is what I want you to do. One, two, three, four." He had taken action on the bills.

LAGE: This is Brown?

WILLIAMS: Governor Brown, Pat Brown. And so I try to do things as carefully as I can in response to his request. I sensed that things were tense and difficult, and I got over and did what I perceived to be what he wanted precisely. And I did.

LAGE: Were these small changes in the bills?

WILLIAMS: Oh no, these were just actions he had taken, and he wanted them reported to the press in a certain way. You know, call this person, call that person kind of thing. So I did it. Well, he picked up the phone and let me have it. He's not that way at all. He's such a gracious person. So I said, "Governor, if that's what you told me, I did the exact opposite."

And somebody called me two minutes later and said, "Bob, he doesn't know what to tell you now, because we told him you did exactly what he told you." You could just see that he was under an

intolerable amount of pressure. And I said, "Well, I know that, so don't worry about it." He said, "He's very upset, and he doesn't know how to handle it." And I said, "Why don't we just forget it, because things are obviously very tense and difficult?" He felt very upset that he had given me a bad time anyhow. And, you know, if I'd made a mistake, you richly deserved to catch a little complaint, but it was one of those things where I thought I had done it very carefully. But again, it was just the time of tension and coping with the problems politically at home and catching it from your own people and catching it from Ronald Reagan. So it sort of ended on a down note.

But again, as soon as the session was over, I left. And I physically remove from the operation of the governor's office, so I go back into the bowels of the department doing my regular chores, so what was going on day-to-day during the campaign, the end of the campaign, and the loss to Ronald Reagan, the immediate post-election period, then the transition, all lost to me. I avoided going over there.

[Interruption]

LAGE: We were talking about how you escaped from the transition process.

WILLIAMS: Well, I escaped from the campaign, and I saw it happening, and I saw the loss, obviously, but I wasn't there feeling it, and so the transition. . . . This is the one transition that I participated in indirectly where the parties really didn't like each other, because the incumbent got beat by somebody, and so the existing staff is not too pleased--in fact, outraged--and the new people of course don't trust the existing staff, in part because it was a hard-fought battle, and secondly because they didn't really know what they're doing. I don't mean that critically; it's just a fact.

LAGE: That they didn't know . . .

WILLIAMS: They were newcomers to government, and so they really couldn't trust people too much. If it were a comfortable transition, whether

it be Democrat to Republican, Republican to Democrat, then you take the word of people of how things are done and you are comfortable with their recommendations and their thoughts. Here you're in an adversary position to the very end. I don't think that changed. People just didn't get along. That was my sense of it anyhow. Maybe there was a friendlier relationship than I thought existed. It's just difficult to love the people who beat you.

LAGE: Right.

WILLIAMS: Yes, so that's my one experience, and it's a limited one, where every other transition was a comfortable one: one where the parties made an honest effort in each case to aid the incoming governor to face the tasks ahead of him.

LAGE: But you weren't working in the governor's office during that period?

WILLIAMS: No, I wasn't, but when I came. . . . I got a call after the transition started. But I heard that everything was not rosy, and it shouldn't be. You know, you can really be annoyed by this new group coming in. And so I got a call from [Vernon L.] Vern Sturgeon, who was a senator from San Luis Obispo County who was appointed--he was going to be one of the legislative secretaries. They had a pair of them in those days, for reasons I could never fathom.

LAGE: One for the senate and one for the assembly?

WILLIAMS: Yes, one of the truly foolish ideas ever conceived of by anybody.

LAGE: Was that just started with Reagan?

WILLIAMS: It started with Reagan, but since foolish ideas seem to get promoted, they did it for a short period during [Governor Edmund G.] Jerry Brown's [Jr.] administration. And I think the participants would totally agree with what I'm saying: there's no such thing as a senate person and an assembly person; you have a work product. And pretty soon, you know, "I think the senate's better than the assembly" kind of thing and "Your bills are dumb and my bills are good."

LAGE: And this really happened?

WILLIAMS: Well, no, you get fond of the body you're dealing with, and that has nothing to do with the work product that's generated, because it represents a lot of work on both houses. It isn't just one house's work.

LAGE: And they have to come out with one together in the end.

WILLIAMS: One together, and so you may have people going up to the senate and the assembly and becoming expert in terms of relationships with them, but it doesn't make a lot of sense.

But I got a call from Vern Sturgeon, who I understood was going to be the legislative secretary. He ultimately was legislative secretary for the senate. I know Vern never liked the arrangement, and his counterpart from the assembly side came from a company that markets olives and cans them, a major operation, a very nice person.

LAGE: Was this Jack [B.] Lindsey?

WILLIAMS: Jack Lindsey. I happened to know his wife, again because my mother knew her family. They were local people. And Jack was the assembly person.

LAGE: But he hadn't been in the government.

WILLIAMS: No, he had not been in government, and he was a neophyte. That's true of virtually everybody. Vern was an exception. A few other people had been in the process and had a sense of it. Vern provided some stability. He had been reapportioned out when the supreme court demanded one person, one vote--at that time one man, one vote. He was reapportioned out because of the demand that the senate represent people and not rocks and trees. I found him to be a very able legislative secretary. Ultimately, the assembly/senate division disappeared when Lindsey left. So that problem was solved.

LAGE: But Sturgeon was the one who called you?

WILLIAMS: He called me and said, "Would you like to come over and train your replacement?" Well, I had no rancor or bitterness. I'm a

career civil servant. I'm not going to try to annoy the new people even though I'm not going to see the governor's office anymore. So I came over and explained what I did, and Gino Lera came in and explained to Vern what he did. They had a transition office up here on the mall; and that's provided for in the budget so the governor-elect can get situated right after the election and get things moving, so state money is available for this purpose. And I said I'd be happy to do whatever I could to assist the person who was going to do the job.

I think Jack Lindsey called me and said, "How would you like to come to work for us?" He smiled over the phone, I guess, and said, "I don't think we can find anybody who wants to do your job." So I thought, "Well, that's fine. I'd be happy to do it." And both Gino and I came to work for both Jack and Vern, and I think with a degree of suspicion on the part of other staff members about our loyalty, our integrity and everything else, because they sense hostility from the people they dealt with, and here we are carryovers from that former administration. It's kind of a natural feeling, and I accepted it.

LAGE: Did you discuss it with them? Discuss your concept of the role or . . .

WILLIAMS: No, we just went to work. I enjoyed doing it, so it looked very pleasant. And Vern was such a gracious person that it was fun working for him. He is truly. . . . He was a nonpartisan individual. I mean he was a good Republican, but he dealt with people on a very bipartisan basis. As a result, he was easy to work for, and he looked out for your interests. And you could complain to him, and he could cope with it. He'd pat you on the head, you know.

LAGE: Was he a pretty straightforward guy?

WILLIAMS: Straightforward guy, yes. He was a milk producer, and he was at the receiving end of the milk. He didn't have a dairy farm. A real neat person. He'd been in business and been a part-time legislator. Now he was a full-time legislative secretary. Ultimately became a

member of the PUC [Public Utilities Commission], well liked by everybody.

So we stayed on and tried to develop a system that would be helpful to Vern and Jack in responding to legislative demands and following bills as they were introduced and went through the process. And as I said, in time, in a fairly short time. . . . There's always some initial disruptions. They had some because of the executive secretary and the assistant executive secretary leaving because of the homosexual scandals.

LAGE: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: And you get these little glitches in process where you have personnel disruptions. And that happened in the Reagan years, and with Jack Lindsey leaving, Vern then became legislative secretary. He was replaced in turn by George [R.] Steffes, who is now a third-house person here.

LAGE: How did you describe George Steffes?

WILLIAMS: A legislative secretary and more than that. He had a role that was greater than legislative secretary. George's role started off, I think, more narrowly, initially. In fact, he wouldn't agree with this description, but he was a hatchet man. He had to tell people they were being fired: clerical employees, support staff. They were really going after people, probably people they shouldn't have fired, because they were really expert.

LAGE: So these would be civil service people?

WILLIAMS: No, no. There's nobody in the governor's office who's civil service. They're all exempt from civil service.

LAGE: Oh, I see. So this is why you liked staying with the Department of Transportation. [Laughter]

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Well, I had a right to go back to it legally, but there were some other advantages salarywise and everything. I didn't want to get the pay the governor's office was willing to pay people. It's all selfish reasons. But George had to go around and tell people they'd been fired. They had an initial cut of people who were

partisan. They got rid of those right away--and you should--and the major policy players are gone. Then they said, "Everything's fine." At least everybody felt it was. Around Christmas time they fired a whole new group of people. And that was very difficult, because they hadn't gone out looking for jobs in the legislature and elsewhere. Then they had to go back and rehire some people. It's just a disruption that comes from inexperience.

And I think George found out probably--he's a very sensitive person--and probably found out the most difficult thing you ever had to do was go around and tell people they were being laid off. And then call them up later and tell them they can come back. So he never won any points doing this, but he was an exceptionally good legislative secretary, probably one of the best I've ever worked for.

But the process smoothed out as people gained experience and learned the hard way and the staff settled in and gained insight into what they were doing, and the process started refining itself.

LAGE: Now are we talking strictly about the process of dealing with the legislature?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Developing a more formal process, insuring that the governor's office had a greater degree of control, if you will, or oversight over the process. The governor was developing a cabinet process as a means of review of policy, including legislative matters of some note. And the cabinet and the governor were the focus of any kind of legislative review of significant bills, and we developed standards for bills that would go to the cabinet. They'd be discussed in cabinet. The cabinet would make a decision.

LAGE: Let's talk a little bit about that kind of decision. Let's kind of walk through the process. Is there a bill that we could use to illustrate the process? It seems easier than talking in the abstract. It's up to you.

WILLIAMS: OK. Let's use a bill. . . . During the Reagan administration, a lot of environmental bills were passed, in part because there was a great

demand for changes in environmental law. And it occurred during the Reagan administration. He participated in some of it; some of it he acquiesced in. But whatever happened, a lot of major bills, more major environmental bills passed during the Reagan administration than you'd probably find in any other administration. Let's take the CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act.[1]

LAGE: That's a good one.

WILLIAMS: That's a good one. [Norman B.] Norm Livermore was the Resources Agency secretary, very sympathetic to environmental matters, probably more sympathetic than other members of the cabinet to such issues, because they tended to be more conservative. That bill was going through the process and being reviewed by cabinet.

LAGE: And it was a bill that came up from the legislature.

WILLIAMS: Yes, from the legislature.

LAGE: The governor had nothing to do with designing it.

WILLIAMS: Yes. And so accommodations were reached. But when the bill came to the governor, even though there was agreement--this is the way the governor wanted to go and he was agreeable to the bill . . .

LAGE: Now, let me back up, because maybe I'm. . . . While the bill was going through the legislature, was there some feed-in from the governor?

WILLIAMS: There's always input from the appropriate departments through the agency, in this case the Resources Agency.

LAGE: Would that come up through your office first?

WILLIAMS: Well, yes. That in part did. But the agency secretary obviously is going to the cabinet and saying, "This is a good idea. We should be supporting it. You should lend support to the idea." So that went on during the process. We got more actively involved with the cabinet directly when the bills came to the governor. Then we set the standards that bills that were significant, whether they had been

1. A.B. 2045, 1970 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1433.

agreed to or not agreed to, the governor got a chance to rehear the issue: that this bill is now down, "This is what it does, Governor. We still think you should sign it. It is in essence what we agreed to," or "It may not be precisely what we wanted, but we still think it merits your approval." The whole cabinet is there. It can then vote and tell the governor, "We think you should sign the bill," or "You should veto it or take the money out of it," or whatever.

LAGE: Now who would take it to the cabinet meeting? Would that be one of your roles?

WILLIAMS: We would identify the bills, because the parameters had been established. We would sit down and say, "These are the kinds of bills we think you should review:" bills with appropriations in excess of a certain amount of money; bills that had serious policy considerations even though they were the governor's bills; bills that he had actively supported, so he'd be aware of what was before him; bills that our departments wanted vetoed; bills that other folks wanted vetoed that were significant. So everything was going through the cabinet process, in an orderly way, and the cabinet secretary that had responsibility for the subject of the bill was responsible to present it.

LAGE: I see.

WILLIAMS: We had someone from our office in there generally, and it was a well-run process. It [the cabinet] would spend eight, ten, twelve hours at a crack at it, at the end of the session, again with this big mass of bills. And the governor was at most of the meetings. So he was in there listening and getting a sense of where they were coming from and he'd say, "I think that. . . . I'm going to sign that bill." Or the cabinet would recommend that, "Governor, this is something you should consider," to sign or to veto. So that went on on a regular basis, most of the time spent at the very end of the session.

LAGE: Now on the CEQA legislation, in analyzing the bill, did you come up with any premonition about the way the court case, the later court case,[1] would look at it?

WILLIAMS: Nobody in the western world could come up with that. That's a good point. I picked CEQA [to discuss] because it's. . . . I have never spent my time taking on the supreme court on issues, but this is one where they made something up, literally. I remember the letter from the then attorney general explaining the bill to us, because they were deeply involved in the process and very supportive of it, of the bill they thought went to the governor. [Laughter] And what the author thought went to the governor, although the author certainly changed his tune when he went to the court . . .

LAGE: I interviewed [Thomas H.] Tom Willoughby [legislative staff member, 1961-1983], and we talked about this some too, and he agrees with you that there was nothing in . . .

WILLIAMS: Oh, no. The bill couldn't have gotten through the legislature with the interpretation the court gave the bill. I'm not knocking anybody, it's just a classic. . . . If I were an author maybe I'd be out there saying, "Well, you know, that's what we intended to do." You look at the file for this particular bill, because I did after the Mammoth case came down, and I thought, "How could the court arrive at this conclusion?" It was a reach, as far as I'm concerned.

LAGE: It was [Assemblyman John T.] Jack Knox who was the author.

WILLIAMS: Yes, Jack Knox. Of course, Jack Knox is one of the most able guys around. And of course, Jack Knox at this juncture has an opportunity to expand his horizons, and he did. But that's the best case I can think of where he didn't have the votes for his interpretation, or the court's interpretation, and I don't think anybody perceived the bill to do what the court said it did. Now he

---

1. *Friends of Mammoth et al. v. Board of Supervisors of Mono County*, 8 Cal. 3d 247 (1972). This decision applied the requirement for an environmental impact report to private as well as public projects.

was pleased with the result, obviously, and I'm not quarreling with Mr. Knox. He's still around and he's one of the most able people you'll ever meet. He never gave up on the issue, but there was a little legislating I think at that juncture by the supreme court in the Mammoth case.

LAGE: So that wasn't something that came up [in the cabinet], the possible dangers of the . . .

WILLIAMS: No, absolutely not. I think if that was perceived, that danger was before the house, there would have been a different result. I think either before the legislature or before the governor. If somebody says, "Hey, Governor, I'm convinced that if this goes up to the courts, you're going to find that this bill does a heck of a lot more than we think it does," that never came up, as best I can recall.

LAGE: I'm thinking of other things that have come up in interviews I've done. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act[1] came along, two bills almost identical coming through at the same time, one [Senator Randolph] Randy Collier,[2] one [Senator] Peter [H.] Behr's.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LAGE: Do you recall anything about how the governor decided which one to sign?

WILLIAMS: I can't recall. Collier's bill was probably less environmental than Behr's, obviously, because Randy Collier was the highway builder, and while he represented Yreka he tended to be very conservative and less environmentally oriented than Peter Behr.

LAGE: It wasn't too significantly different, according to Behr.[3] He kept amending it to make it like Behr's. [Laughter]

WILLIAMS: Yes, yes, well, I don't mean. . . . I'm making a surmise now, but Behr obviously had, I think, a more direct interest in wild and scenic rivers. That's unfair to the good Senator Collier, but we

---

1. S.B. 107, 1972 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1259.
2. S.B. 4, 1972 Reg. Sess.
3. Peter H. Behr, Oral History Interview conducted 1988 and 1989 by Ann Lage, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

dealt with him a lot on highway matters, and he seemed to focus on those things more than environmental concerns, although he did live in the area and did have concerns about the rivers up there. But I don't think that was his principal focus.

LAGE: But you wouldn't be privy to why one was picked over the other?

WILLIAMS: I can't recall, although an inclination would be they probably liked Collier more than they liked Behr. [Laughter]

LAGE: They ended up signing Behr's.

WILLIAMS: Again, I think Norm Livermore played a very significant role as an environmentalist. And probably, you know, it was at a time when a lot of people were still perceived as posy pluckers and people you just had to tolerate. Today you don't tolerate these people; they are doing things now, and they are accomplishing what should have been accomplished years ago.

LAGE: Did you get into the Dos Rios dam controversy at all?

WILLIAMS: I don't recall that.

LAGE: Because that was a case where the departments and the Resources Agency were going at each other, and I just thought maybe . . .

WILLIAMS: I have memories of it, but again, it's like a lot of things: they're of interest, and then you just let them go because you've got something else to worry about.

LAGE: Sure. And you were a person who had to look at so many different fields and become knowledgeable, it seems.

WILLIAMS: Yes, the one thing we had to do, and the cabinet by the way was amenable to this. . . . I'm happy to say that while there are a lot of egos in any cabinet, they are the kind of people who can cope with someone writing a note that their decision makes no coherent sense, except you did it more graciously than that. Some cabinet member would stand up, and through the force of his--generally [it was "his"] in the Reagan administration--his personality would sway the whole group. Even though he didn't know a thing about it and was dead wrong on what he said to the group, they made a decision on this forceful argument from someone who was factually wrong.

You would write a note, "That isn't a valid reason to veto this bill. That's the present law." And the answer would come back, "Sign it."

So we tried to make sure that a cabinet decision to sign the bill or to veto a bill had a sound, factual basis. I never heard anybody say, "Quit second-guessing us." Or I'd say, "Do you really want to sign this one?" And it would come back, yes, for this reason. So you're trying to do a good job and not just be a passive processor of paper at that juncture.

LAGE: Now, again I'm referring to the *California Journal* article where it mentioned that you would make your recommendations in part on what you perceived to be the governor's points of view.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes.

LAGE: Now how did you . . .

WILLIAMS: Oh, you're conscious of where the governor's coming from. Governor Reagan had a program that he announced. You knew where he was coming from in terms of fiscal policy, and everybody had a pretty good sense of what had been worked out; if you had been doing your job you knew what was going on during the process in which a bill was considered. And you made a recommendation on routine bills on your own because you knew them, and most of the other people in the office didn't know them.

LAGE: Routine bills that didn't have an ideology or . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, or any major fiscal impact or policy impact but were necessary. Let me get a couple here for you of the files.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

LAGE: How do you happen to have all these files?

WILLIAMS: When Governor Reagan left office, I prevailed on Ed Meese, who was then the executive secretary or now would be called chief of staff, to leave the enrolled files in the State Archives, still under the control of the governor's office. He took the bulk of his files to the

Hoover Institute. I think they're still there. But since there are always lawyers looking and trying to get a sense of legislative intent, I prevailed on Ed to keep these here and . . .

LAGE: Now exactly which files are they, did you say?

WILLIAMS: These are the files that go to the governor when he signs or vetoes a bill. And this is what they look like.

LAGE: I see. So when they're trying to determine intent in a court case, as in CEQA . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, I would have access to the file. And the archives can't let other people look at them. I have prevailed on Ed in part of my retirement to get things changed so the archives can let them be reviewed there without any further clearance or be pulled out.

LAGE: So now they're in the archives but you have . . .

WILLIAMS: I'm the custodian.

LAGE: The custodian. How interesting.

WILLIAMS: Well, that's the way it's set up, and we're trying to get the president, through Ed Meese, to tell archives, "Everything is rosy; you can keep the files and let people look at them." That hasn't happened yet, so if anybody wants to look at them, they have to call me.

LAGE: And they're considered his files rather than state property.

WILLIAMS: They're still his files. There's no quarrel there. There was a quarrel with the Brown, Jr., files when he sent everything to USC [University of Southern California] and the secretary of state asserted he had no legal right because of a law amended in '75. These were all prior to '75.

LAGE: I see. Did Brown, Jr., send this type of . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, he did. I prevailed on him to leave the files with archives and leave them open, and he did do that.

LAGE: Oh, he did?

WILLIAMS: Yes, so I don't have to worry about those. I have to worry about Reagan's file. I'm still the custodian in the sense that I have access to them, and I try to help lawyers on any side of the issue.

Here's a classic routine bill, for example, an assembly bill by [Assemblyman] Bob Monagan, who was speaker for a period of time.

LAGE: A.B. 77.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LAGE: In 1969.

WILLIAMS: Yes. It indicates a vote, what the bill does, who's for it, who's against it, and there's an initial there on the approve side. I recommended approve, and what's that, GRS?

LAGE: Yes, looks like it. George Steffes.

WILLIAMS: And that's George Steffes. And then it would go into the governor. Routine bill, not perceived as having any policy . . .

LAGE: OK. So this wouldn't give him any . . .

WILLIAMS: Wouldn't give him any fits or starts. It would be put in the easy-to-do file. And I'd go over the bills with him.

LAGE: You yourself would go over the bills with the governor as he was signing?

WILLIAMS: After they'd been cleared. Before he signed them.

LAGE: Before he signed them?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Here's another one of the same type. I didn't pull these out at random. I just haven't returned them to the archives.

LAGE: What were your sessions with the governor like when you went over . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, you try to go over them as fast as you can, because you had a lot to do.

LAGE: How many at a time would you have?

WILLIAMS: Oh, you'd try to do twenty, thirty bills at a time, plus the bills that had been decided in cabinet. Then you'd take those in separately and those would be addressed separately. But he had been. . . . This is . . .

LAGE: Is this another straightforward one?

WILLIAMS: But again, I didn't pick one. . . . Had I thought, I would have brought one over that was difficult.

LAGE: It might have been a thicker folder?

WILLIAMS: A thicker folder and one with a cabinet stamp on the cover saying what action. These were bills that wouldn't go to cabinet, because they didn't involve either policy, fiscal or any concern. See, there are no no votes and people are happy with the bill.

LAGE: So that's pretty routine.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and most bills are in that category.

LAGE: Now, can you give a description of a bill that might have been controversial, and how would your encounter with Reagan have gone?

WILLIAMS: Well, if it were controversial it would have been heard in cabinet. I wouldn't just pack it in under my arm and say, "Here, Governor, here's an interesting bill."

LAGE: Right, no, I know.

WILLIAMS: Unless he saw something that intrigued him, that he might. . . . He tended not to, because we were pretty careful about what bills were in the category that required cabinet review, special review. Most bills were of this type. So he got to see the routine bills at one time and the difficult bills at another.

LAGE: So a difficult bill, he may have already had his attention drawn to?

WILLIAMS: Oh yes, he would have, if we had done our job properly. He wasn't nit-picking the bills. Governor [George] Deukmejian reads every bill, and sometimes I sense--and this is not criticism--he's such a meticulous person, he spends too much time on routine bills and not enough time on the big ones, because he's very careful and there's not enough time in the day to do that.

LAGE: Instead of sort of relying on your process.

WILLIAMS: Each governor does it differently. And Governor Deukmejian likes to sit down and go over the bills very carefully, very methodically. He doesn't want some staffer telling him what's good and bad. I understand that, but it really makes it tough to get the job done, because pretty soon you spend more time on the "no-brainers" than

you do on the big ones. And he would disagree, that they're not "no-brainers"; they're all important.

[Interruption]

WILLIAMS: But with Governor Reagan, those bills that you brought into him were.... He had already seen the tough ones. He had met with legislators on some. So he knew what he was dealing with. He was dealing with routine, or he was dealing with something that the cabinet had already reviewed. And generally he was in the cabinet meeting, so he had a good memory of what decision had been made.

LAGE: How did you see him as governor? I'm sure a lot of people have asked you that.

WILLIAMS: Well, I think he's a rather remarkable person. People told me that they hated him because he was an actor and he dyed his hair. I said, "Well, a lot of people dye their hair and you don't think ill of them." I think the person I was talking to did. [Laughter] You know, a lot of people do that, men and women, so why pick on him for it?

I think he was frustrating because he could create the image that he was fiscally very conservative and uncaring and everything else and then proceed to spend money like it was going out of style. The greatest tax increase, and carried by George Deukmejian [in the senate], something I think the governor would like to forget, was for Reagan to take care of some of the problems that he was caught with. And he handled the problem with increasing taxes. Then he said that his feet were in concrete on the issue of income tax withholding, which was a major funding revenue source, and yet after he signed the bill and with some, I'm quite sure, reluctance, someone gave him a pair of oxfords in concrete. Whenever anyone came in to visit him, he'd go over and pick up the concrete base and show it to them and talk about it, because he could cope with that. He, like his predecessor, always put all the original cartoons,

the editorial cartoons, those that weren't always flattering, on the wall. He could handle that, and he always did.

I sense that he was far more attuned to what was going on than people assert that he is, either as governor or as president. I think they want to paint him in the bleakest light in terms of superficial understanding. Probably not one to spend a lot of time on the dotting every "i" and crossing every "t" in the details of bills. That you find with Governor Deukmejian, you find with Jerry Brown. Again, that's just the way the personality of the individual is. Another governor would say, "Gee, I've got more important things to do than look at some codification bill or validating act. I better rely on somebody else to tell me that's a routine bill that won't hurt anybody, won't hurt me politically, and won't do anything bad for folks." Another governor would say, "Oh, no, look, that's one of my responsibilities and I'm going to take it on full time." But then there are only twenty-four hours in a day, and governors have to make judgments about that.

His hours were more regular than Jerry Brown's. He followed a schedule. George Deukmejian follows a schedule to the letter. So did Pat Brown. Jerry Brown followed no schedule that anyone could perceive. Again, a different style of doing a job. You just have to live with that. He's got a home to go to at the end of the day. He came in at 9:00, left whenever he did, and his wife looked out for his interests in terms of his well being. I was getting him to sign bills one day at his residence here in Sacramento, and he was heading out to KCRA I think, or one of the channels, for an interview, a talk show or something. He looked as sick as any human being could be, and he was. He had the flu, and he looked terrible--if that guy could ever look bad. He looked terribly ill. He said he felt awful. And he said, "I'll see you later." He signed the bills and headed out to do it. He was a good soldier and well liked by staff, always polite to people, and I think could charm the birds out of a tree.

LAGE: Really?

WILLIAMS: I remember during the height of the student conflict, the trouble at UC [University of California], he met with student body presidents from all over the state. None of them found him to be a neat person. I mean they really did not like him, found him to be truly awful. One of them came out of the meeting--I was waiting to do some bills after the meeting was over--and the young man came out, I forgot what school he represented, he said, "I've got to leave this meeting. That son of a bitch is turning me around."

LAGE: [Laughter] That's a great story.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and because he would listen and he would try to explain where he was coming from. I had legislators come to me after he had a meeting with them on a bill, in private, and say, "I don't care if he vetoes my bill. I'll make not one complaint, because he listened to me." I think he did well when he did deal with the legislature.

LAGE: Did he do a lot of that?

WILLIAMS: Not a lot of it. He didn't. . . . I think staff insulates you from the legislature. The legislature becomes the enemy, and staff tends to become the palace guard that prevents you from probably dealing as effectively as you should with the legislature. But in defense of the palace guard, there are 120 legislators generally, all of them wanting to see you personally. Some just want to come in and chit-chat. And when you're terribly busy and somebody comes in and they've had one drink too many after, in the old days, the Derby Club, you don't find it too humorous when you're sober and working hard. So the governors are always hard pressed to meet everybody's need, to see people or legislators; and legislators would like to spend more time with the governor. They feel they could contribute something. So how do you do it? I don't know, but every governor, I think, gets this complaint that he doesn't see me, he doesn't listen to me, and all he does is talk to one person or another or the leadership people, you know, and so they get mad at him. And that's true of this governor or any other governor.

LAGE: It might just be the way the system works.

WILLIAMS: It's just the system. I think you've got to balance it off to make sure staff doesn't isolate you too much from what's going on out there in the real world, and I think there's a tendency, because legislators complain about the governor or describe him in less than complimentary terms, and staff reacts to that. This staff is no different than any other. You protect the person you work for. And while Governor Deukmejian's a former legislator, both assemblyman and senator, and I think they assumed that he'd be easy to deal with, that's not been the case. I mean easy in the sense that they could convince him of anything. It has not happened, although I think his relationship is better today than it once was with both of the leadership people on the Democratic side.

LAGE: Did you go to cabinet meetings yourself in the Reagan years?

WILLIAMS: Well, in the Reagan years I'd sometimes go, but I was too busy. So somebody would always be there. The legislative secretary would be there or somebody. A lot of people wanted to go to cabinet meetings, because then you were important. But we were really crashing things through, because not only did we have to prepare these enrolled bill reports, we had to prepare the veto messages; we had to make sure they're delivered in a timely way; we had to file everything with the secretary of state; they had to be chaptered in the proper order. So all the clerical work, if you will, although it certainly had a substantive impact on the decision, had to keep on going. Our people worked from early in the morning to late at night; they got very little rest during this period.

LAGE: What about the process when the governor himself was putting forth a bill? Did you get involved in that, in writing legislation?

WILLIAMS: Well, on rare occasions we'd get involved, but generally the department concerned would do it, and we would track them. We then developed a system, manual tracking system; today you'd have it on the computer. We had no such advantages, so we did it manually, so the governor and the legislative secretary and

everybody knew where everything was in the scheme of things: what bills have been introduced, who introduced them, where they were, when they were set for hearing, and when they were coming down, and then they'd have signing ceremonies or special press releases when the bills were signed.

LAGE: Is this where you get the traffic cop designation?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LAGE: Would you review the department's language? Was this part of the function?

WILLIAMS: On occasion. Not always. You're hopeful. . . . It's an article of faith, and sometimes you should have. Bills are not always well drafted. On rare occasion I would draft bills, because they weren't doing it right. The department just couldn't accomplish what they wanted to do, so on a couple of occasions I actually presented bills and carried them through the process, but I tried not to do that. It's very time consuming, and while it's fun, it's hard to do when you're busy.

LAGE: What goes into making a good piece of legislation? Is that something that can be described?

WILLIAMS: Well, I don't know if I can describe it, because it's a little like making sausage, I'm told: you start off with something, and you're not sure what you have in the casing when you're finished. But someone has an idea that everybody agrees is a good one; it's just a matter of putting it in proper form. Sometimes they just don't understand that if you make this change, there's a change down the road or it affects another code or another process. So you try to see those issues when you're looking at legislation. How does it impact on other programs that maybe you didn't even think of?

LAGE: Would you have anything to do with the legislative analyst's office [LAO]?

WILLIAMS: Our only contact with the leg. analysts is that they prepare an analysis and testify, as does the Department of Finance, in the fiscal committees, what they call now the Senate Appropriations

[Committee] and Assembly Ways and Means [Committee]. Now we have a Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, which is new, but they appear in those committees. Our Department of Finance appears in those committees, and we clear their positions.

LAGE: But you didn't have any kind of a cooperative relationship?

WILLIAMS: Well, we have a cooperative relationship, but it's usually between the Department of Finance and the leg. analyst's office. They perform essentially the same function, one for the executive, one for the legislative branch, and they have a close tie. Our departments do, too, because they deal with their analysts in the Department of Finance, with their analysts over in the LAO.

LAGE: It sounds very complex, the whole process.

WILLIAMS: It works pretty well, but we do produce a lot of sausage. [Laughter]

LAGE: I like that term.

WILLIAMS: Well, and that isn't a criticism of the legislature, things just don't go through always the way you want them to; and you'd like to get something through, so it goes through and it doesn't maybe do anywhere near what you want it to do.

LAGE: Of course, there's that process of compromise.

WILLIAMS: And it is. Maybe your idea isn't any good anyhow, but you can't believe that. Some members just want to get something through, something, even if it doesn't do a darn thing.

LAGE: Just to have their name on something?

WILLIAMS: Well, or they'll find that what they've done is an outrage, and they will privately call and say, "Could you just veto the bill because of technical flaws, but don't tell anybody that I told you. I just found out this is not the bill I thought it was. I'm carrying it. . . ." The member's the jockey. This horse is being ridden down the track pell-mell with no sense of what it really is, and he finds out that he wasn't riding a horse but a camel and it isn't what he wanted to do, and the result is not what he or she wanted to do, and so what do you do? You gracefully pull the bill back out of the process or sometimes ask that it be vetoed.

LAGE: Did that happen frequently?

WILLIAMS: It happens on a regular basis. Sometimes the sponsors find that they have just done a bad job of drafting it, or somebody has slipped something into the bill that they didn't fully perceive, and they want the bill vetoed. And it will be vetoed at the request of the author.

LAGE: Were there some legislators that you developed more respect for than others?

WILLIAMS: Oh, sure. That's a personal thing. Some members are known for their integrity and skill and ability, and some of the very able ones you've got to watch. And I think they would admit that you should watch them: the [Assemblyman William T.] Bill Bagleys and the Jack Knoxes are just top-flight people, but, you know, read the bill before you sign it. I had one member come in one day and say, "Get him to sign it before he gets wind of it." I don't know why he told me that. Obviously I'm not going to do that. So he said, "Jerry, sign the bill. Williams has got the bill." And he's looking at me, and I said, "It's not ready yet." And Jerry said, "No, I'll look at it later." He said, "Oh, come on, do it now." And he vetoed the bill.

LAGE: This is Jerry Brown.

WILLIAMS: Yes, this is Jerry Brown. So, you know, you don't want the governor to get trapped in those kind of things.

LAGE: No, that's sort of your job.

WILLIAMS: In fact, Pat Brown once, because he was fond of the people who had sponsored the bill--Sergeant [ ] Crowley, who represented the San Francisco police, and that was the governor's home base in San Francisco--so he said, "We'll have a signing ceremony for one of your bills." So they had a mock ceremony with all the police there, Sergeant Crowley, everybody smiling, and he signed this imaginary bill. He vetoed the bill.

LAGE: Oh, no! He vetoed it later?

WILLIAMS: Later. It came down later. He didn't realize what was in it. You don't sign things without reading them.

LAGE: That must have created some ill will.

WILLIAMS: It created a lot of ill will. I have the newspaper account and the picture. Someone sent it to me. I wasn't there happily, because we had no mock ceremonies. None. It was mock after the fact, not before the fact.

LAGE: Well, they probably learned from that experience.

WILLIAMS: They learned a hard lesson. I gave it to Governor Deukmejian to remind him this is what can happen to you. He said, "No, I'd never plan to commit myself in advance of anything coming. I'm going to look at it first." That's his nature anyhow, but Jerry Brown didn't do it either. We'd have a signing ceremony maybe a day or two later to placate the sponsors and the author.

LAGE: Do you remember anything about the Beilenson therapeutic abortion bill?[1]

WILLIAMS: Yes, very much so. That is something that sticks in my mind more than.... I was going to mention the bill to you, because Senator [Anthony] Beilenson and a Republican member of the senate were called to come down to the governor's office, as were reporters, and the governor [Reagan].... And they came in with the look of people who are anticipating a firing squad. They didn't know what was going to happen, at least I don't think they did. The governor brought everybody together and signed the bill in the presence of the principal authors and the press.

LAGE: And they had no idea?

WILLIAMS: Well, maybe they did, but the look on their face belied that. Maybe somebody said, "Now everything's OK. Come on down." I'm not sure, and this is just my surmise, because I never checked. They looked apprehensive. It was Tony Beilenson and Senator--darn it, who was it? They both looked apprehensive to me. I don't know why. I was there, because I had the file. And he signed the bill.

LAGE: Do you remember anything about the reasoning behind it or how the recommendations went forth?

---

1. S.B. 462, 1967 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 327.

WILLIAMS: Well, there had been a lot of amendments and there had been a lot of pulling and hauling, but the bill. . . . You recall Senator John [L.] Harmer, who was lieutenant governor for a brief period, appointed, and ran for the office and lost. Harmer was very conservative on this issue, but he said the parties had worked out their differences and people should keep their promises, and he voted for the bill. Although personally he did not agree with the measure, he had seen the negotiation, I think participated in it, and urged fellow members to vote "aye" even though it didn't mean that he supported the idea of abortion. I think the governor heard from Harmer and he heard from others who were not the kind of people you would expect would support such a bill. I think Senator Beilenson was surprised the governor signed.

LAGE: We have the interview with Sturgeon, and he apparently felt he had worked a lot with the legislature . . . [1]

WILLIAMS: He certainly did.

LAGE: . . . and kind of made commitments.

WILLIAMS: Yes. And when Harmer. . . . I heard him on the floor make that statement, a very conservative Republican member, and you're surprised to hear it from him. He's not the kind of person that you would think would be at that point in time supporting an abortion measure.

Now the governor, I've read, while he was president said upon reflection, he said perhaps he made a mistake. I know there was a lot work done in the legislature. I'm just saying when everybody trooped in that room. Maybe they knew precisely what was going on; I didn't think so. But I brought the file in and obviously he signed it, and everybody was there. There was, as you know, a great deal of pulling and hauling, and we used to get bushel baskets full of mail on both sides.

---

1. Vernon L. Sturgeon, "State Senator, Reagan Advisor, and PUC Commissioner, 1960-1974," 1983. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley.

LAGE: Vern Sturgeon's interview was extremely candid. He says that he didn't take into Reagan all the mail opposing the abortion bill. He didn't bother him with it.

WILLIAMS: Well, it became predictable because the priests in the Catholic churches were telling people to sign petitions after service, and things are coming in by the ton. After a while, mail is mail. You get an idea that one group of people don't like the bill; another group of people like it. And that's just further evidence of it.

LAGE: You don't need to look at it all.

WILLIAMS: You don't have to look at it all to have that view. The governor already knew that the Roman Catholic Church did not like the bill. He didn't have to be.... Even if not a single letter came in, he already knew that.

LAGE: Did that one go to cabinet? Was that something discussed in the cabinet? Do you remember?

WILLIAMS: I don't remember. It might not have. It wouldn't have drifted into him either. But it could have been something he said, "No, Vern, I'm going to do it. I made up my mind. I don't need a cabinet to tell me what to do." But I can't recall that. But I can recall the time he signed it and precisely where he signed it. He signed it in what is now the Ronald Reagan Cabinet Room, but it was his office, the office in front of his office.

LAGE: And you didn't sense particular trepidation on his part?

WILLIAMS: Well, he may have had it; I don't know. But he did it. That's the one thing I was sure of.

LAGE: That's what we remember.

WILLIAMS: That's what I do remember. Vern gave you a far better view of how it developed. All I can remember most vividly is the discussions and debates, the mail, but then the final act of signing the bill. It could have been just as well an announcement that I vetoed the bill. That's just a narrow view of the world. That's the way I saw it.

[Interruption]

LAGE: Are there other bills that you had in mind to talk about that might help illustrate this process or just throw some light on the Reagan administration or the Brown administration?

WILLIAMS: Well, I wasn't around when the Brown administration was in its heyday. The first term was a year of substantial accomplishment and facing the postwar era--it really was still a postwar era in terms of growth. I know Pat Brown was looking forward to the day, I think, when California would be the number one state in population. He's probably regretted that wish ever since, but we've accomplished that goal, if that's a goal, an objective, and unfortunately it's brought all the problems that bigness brings to any state. If we could ship some folks out it would be nice.

LAGE: Sure would.

WILLIAMS: But we can't do that, so his wish for being number one has been realized. And we are now like most big states, lots of problems.

LAGE: And you weren't around during the days when the water plan was being put through and all that.

WILLIAMS: No, I just read about it. I was not a part of that.

LAGE: And you weren't around as full time in the Brown . . .

WILLIAMS: No, I came late in the second term. I mean late because that wasn't the period of activity. I think administrations have these peaks of activity and with the passage of time, you don't gain something, you lose something for whatever reason. And you tend to become a lame duck in the minds of most people. Two terms is what everyone seems to expect. That's almost a guarantee. But at the end of it you're not functioning as well as perhaps you did at the beginning.

LAGE: For many reasons.

WILLIAMS: And I'm not asserting that's true today, but I think Governor Deukmejian is seen in a slightly different light, simply because he announced that he was not running for a third term. Had he said, "I'm running for a third term," maybe the people would be dealing with him in a slightly different way. I don't know.

LAGE: Well, how about the Reagan years? Any other legislation that you had in mind to talk about?

WILLIAMS: I'm trying to think.

LAGE: Did you get involved much in the welfare reform process?

WILLIAMS: I know people that did, so I followed that. In fact, one of the people in our legal division was on the task force for welfare reform. Don't ask me how he got on it, but he did. He is now the executive director of the Pacific Legal Foundation, [Ronald A.] Ron Zumbrun. And so Ron started his career in effect, and headed in the direction of Pacific Legal, with his experience with other people, including [Robert] Bob Carleson. I think that's who has been active in the reform proposal at the state level and working at the federal level as well. So a number of attorneys got together, including Ron, who I don't think ever had anything to do with welfare reform but got on the task force, so I sort of followed what they were doing. That was a major effort in one sense and a debacle in another. Reform, you give something and they give something, depending on what side of the issue you are. The governor gave COLAs [cost of living allowances] . . .

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

LAGE: You were talking about the 1971 Welfare Reform Act.[1]

WILLIAMS: Yes. The cost of living, or COLA, was a built-in escalator for various welfare programs in exchange for changes in programs that were perceived as reform. I think that when you weighed the reform, the reform was more illusory than real because a lot of the reforms were shot down in court. So you bargained for something that balances out pretty well. Long-term maybe you think it's OK, but then suddenly it's disrupted by other parts of the process. And the COLAs of course are built in to the statute and they only can be changed by statute. This year, Governor Deukmejian, for

1. S.B. 796, 1971 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 578.

example, to cut costs is trying to stay the COLAs for a year. That's one of the recommendations, and that's a problem that's ever-present. Most governors resist COLAs because it's bad fiscal planning. You shouldn't just build in escalators. But there are many COLAs in the welfare area as a result of the reform proposal.

Now, the reason why it worked out so well, I think, not as a reform--and I'm not deprecating the attempts of those who attempted it--is that they were dealing with a major league hitter in Mr. Burton, and I think he is as sharp as everyone assumes, not only in reapportionment but in the social service area.

LAGE: Now is this Phil [Assemblyman Phillip Burton] or John [Assemblyman John L. Burton] we're talking about?

WILLIAMS: It was John. John learned a lot from his brother, and they knew how to do things. And I think it was John. He carried on for his brother in the welfare area. But they play hard ball. You hear about Phil Burton in terms of reapportionment, and that's the only thing you hear about, because that's the story that's repeated over and over again. I think he did a lot more than that. He had an abiding interest in mental health and in social programs generally. An abiding interest in it, as does his brother. The passage of time is confusing me, because John was back in Congress and he's back in the legislature today, but he's a slightly different person than he was. I think the passage [of time], he's older; I think the fire isn't as present. He's still kind of an outspoken individual, but I think he was more committed then when he was younger. Drug abuse hadn't entered the scene or anything else.

LAGE: They made it difficult to get through some of the . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, see, and they're never going to give you anything. [Laughter] What they give you they want to extract something from you, and I think they probably came out better in the long haul on the trade.

LAGE: Now, how would these sort of, should we call them negotiations, take place? When you say the Burtons wouldn't give, who were the people who met with the Burtons?

WILLIAMS: Well, you were dealing with the principal players. They had the task force, and they probably had the chief person in that group in the Health and Welfare Agency negotiated with the leadership people, including . . .

LAGE: Was Bill Bagley involved in that as well?

WILLIAMS: Bagley was involved in a lot of things. Bagley likes to get involved in everything. And Bagley, ever since. . . . He's had more appointments from the governor than Carter has pills. He's been on the Transportation Commission, the PUC, name it, he's been . . .

LAGE: Now he's on the [University of California] Board of Regents.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and he's just moving, moving, moving. He spent a lot of time with the governor on various issues. I can't tell you his involvement in welfare reform. He was a major Republican player in the assembly. The administration hammered out something, but you give and you take. It isn't just getting reform. If you want reform, you've got to give something back. I don't think anybody bargains anymore with just "I'll do anything you want." You just don't hear that. The Burtons, certainly you're not going to hear it from the Burtons at that time. You're not going to hear it from the Unruhs at that time. It just isn't in the cards. They felt they were very powerful, and they had the votes, and they weren't going to do your bidding. But by the same token, they did override one Reagan veto in 1973. It was on mental health.

LAGE: Just one?

WILLIAMS: One. Up to that time, the only veto that occurred was in 1946 with [Governor] Earl Warren. He vetoed a bill. It was a measure to provide a lot of state money that accumulated during the war years for reconstruction work, building and the like, for infrastructure, particularly public building. It was sort of pork barrel but probably

needed. And he vetoed it for fiscal reasons, and it was overridden the next day, I think.

LAGE: It had something for everyone in it, probably.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it was something for everyone, and they all voted for override. However, Ronald Reagan's only veto override that was successful was a mental health bill, and I think that was a Burton bill.

LAGE: Was the governor careful about his use of the veto? That's a pretty impressive statistic, only one overridden veto. It makes it sound as if the governor has tremendous power.

WILLIAMS: Well, you need two-thirds vote in each house, and if you've got a close majority, and the Republicans were never that far out of power, and I think there was a different feeling about the office in those days. I think they figured, "Well, the governor vetoed it, and I'll try again. I'll try to convince him." I think that changed or evaporated with Jerry Brown. They found out that there's another way of doing things. Let's go and override him. The Democrats were doing it to their own governor. As a result, they're doing it both on bills and on appointments. Jerry Brown made a lot of appointments, many of which were controversial, that probably would have gone through in earlier times. George Deukmejian's inherited this legacy, and he has his problems with appointments.

LAGE: It's happened more in Washington, too.

WILLIAMS: Oh, sure. It's happening more and more. I think it's just a sign of the times. At one time they just acquiesced in appointments unless you appointed someone who was outrageously bad. They just accepted the fact that maybe you were a crony, maybe you weren't evil but you weren't anything more than that. You weren't competent, but you weren't going to hurt anything; you weren't going to steal anything. A lot of people who are appointed are in that category. You know, I mean they come with good credentials and they don't make the effort they're supposed to make. Governors can't control that, whether they're judges or commissioners or department directors. You don't always know

how a person will turn out when they're put in a new position. But I think that started happening with Reagan's override. That didn't give them an impetus; I just think they decided with Jerry Brown's administration that this may be the time to really not give the governor every benefit of every doubt on vetoes, and if we feel it's appropriate, we should override him.

LAGE: You mentioned with the Welfare Reform Act that a lot was overturned by the courts. Now did this kind of thinking come into your mind in doing your job? Was this something you were looking at when you looked at legislation?

WILLIAMS: No, no. Not anymore than on the CEQA bill. And some of it [the welfare reform legislation] was overturned; I'm not saying all of it was.

LAGE: But you weren't trying to second-guess the courts when you were analyzing the . . .

WILLIAMS: No, nobody's second-guessing the courts, unless you had some experience or had been burned. And most of it was new experiences. At that point in time, groups were becoming more active, more effective in representing the interests of the various people, welfare rights organization. You had the Western Center on Law and Poverty and you had the federally supported . . . [Interruption]

LAGE: Now we're back on, you were saying there was more advocacy . . .

WILLIAMS: I felt at that point in time you were seeing more effective advocacy for the rights of the welfare recipient, for example, or people who felt they have been aggrieved by the process. The tendency today is to address those problems to the courts. The legislature, for example, on the abortion issue, each year puts in language in the budget, in effect to prevent state funding for abortions. Each year the parties are in the First District Court of Appeal, I guess with the same set of pleadings and new dates, and the First District knocks over the legislative language. The last time it went around it went up to the supreme court, and they refused to hear the case.

LAGE: So this is a trend that's come over a period of time.

WILLIAMS: I think the tendency is for people, if they see problems, to litigate them and to gain relief either in the federal or the state courts.

LAGE: Do you think, then, that your counterpart in the job today thinks more about that in formulating the legislation? Or is it just a fact of life?

WILLIAMS: No, I don't think so. It's just a fact of life. You can't. . . . I guess there are some things, you know, that are questionable. Just by their nature they're going to be subject to some attack. They could possibly violate some provision of the constitution. So you've got a hint that the legislative counsel advises us on a bill--they do that on every bill, if they see there's any constitutional problem--that it violates some part of the constitution, due process, or isn't consistent with the constitution in some way or another. So some person may litigate it. We seem to litigate everything in this day. So that fear can't be ever-present or you wouldn't function very well. But, no you're conscious that there are problems.

LAGE: OK. Are there other important acts? One I'm thinking of that was interesting is one of Reagan's final acts, the Energy Conservation Act of '74.[1]

WILLIAMS: Creating the Energy Commission.

LAGE: Right. Do you recall anything surrounding that?

WILLIAMS: That's another one of the major environmental efforts. [Assemblyman Charles] Charlie Warren's major, major effort. Certainly a legislative proposal that was a work product of Assemblyman Warren and Senator [Alfred E.] Alquist, but I think principally Assemblyman Warren and his subcommittee hearings on the subject. He probably was the major force in getting this through.

LAGE: It's kind of surprising that Reagan signed it. Do you remember the process of developing that recommendation?

---

1. A.B. 1575, 1973-74 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 276 (1974).

WILLIAMS: I think it was in the same category as a number of things that might surprise you when you look at the aggregate number of environmental bills that went through that you would say are not fully consistent with the views held by a lot of folks in those days in the Reagan administration, but I think he did fool people. He may have not been the mover and the shaker, but he still signed them. And had he vetoed them, I don't think they would have been overridden. They would have had to wait for the next administration. So if you look at environmental legislation, most of it was passed during his administration. Not because, principally, of his efforts but it was happening during that time. And he participated. We had changes in the BCDC, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

LAGE: Well, that was actually established during Reagan's time.

WILLIAMS: Yes. These are all things that happened; for whatever reason, he acquiesced or worked things out with people and signed them. So they did happen. I'm not saying he stood around as the chief environmentalist for the state of California. I don't think he ever asserted that. But he wasn't the person that attempted to stop this, nor did he veto major efforts in this regard.

LAGE: A lot of that legislation created new bodies, like the Energy Commission, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission . . .

WILLIAMS: This seems to be inconsistent with everything that the administration stood for.

LAGE: Right.

WILLIAMS: You know, more government, the proliferation of agencies and more hoops for business to jump through to get anything done, so I can't always explain it to you, because it is inconsistent, if you have an energy commission, if you have another local government body that you've got to go to hat in hand to get something done. So the business community I don't think was always happy with these

things. In the case of CEQA, while he thought it had a limited effect, it still was a major step in the environmental area.

LAGE: Yes, well it ended up having quite an effect.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and I don't think that was everyone's intention, though. But again, here all these things happened during his administration, and people will comment on that. And not asserting that he was the reason why it happened, I think the time was. . . . He was there; he was governor during a time when people were doing this.

LAGE: I read and have heard that he didn't like political considerations to be brought up in weighing a bill.

WILLIAMS: That's probably true. It's kind of hard not to on a given day.

LAGE: Right. Would this be written into your analysis at all?

WILLIAMS: No, I wouldn't do that. Somebody else might, but I wouldn't. I might add that he was. . . . A particular member, and I will not mention who it is to you, would annoy him immensely.

LAGE: A member of the legislature?

WILLIAMS: The legislature. Would come in and within ten minutes he just couldn't stop talking and would finally get him annoyed. An otherwise very able person, but he just had a tendency to irk the governor. I can't tell you fully why, but you almost had to hide the author's name, so he said, "If I can veto it, tell me." I said, "No, it's a good bill." [Laughter]

LAGE: Is this a Republican member?

WILLIAMS: Yes, a Republican member.

LAGE: It's interesting how personalities . . .

WILLIAMS: You know, it was something that just got him. He was a very easygoing, warm-hearted person. This particular individual on a given day could get him set off in a way that was very negative. But everybody made the effort not to bait the governor in turn by saying, "Here's another one of this guy's bills. Veto it!" That doesn't accomplish anything either.

LAGE: That's right. [Laughter] Let's see. Are there other bills that you think we should talk about? Do you recall any others that would

help illustrate this process or have particularly interesting stories that go with them?

WILLIAMS: I wish I could. The environmental bills I think were significant. We saw changes during the Reagan years that other people acquiesced in. We wanted to take people out of the hospitals because we didn't want to warehouse them, the state hospitals.

LAGE: The mental?

WILLIAMS: The mental hospitals, particularly, and the facilities for the what we now call developmentally disabled folks. We were warehousing large numbers of people, and in fact, judges on a weekly basis were shipping large numbers of elderly people, generally, to state hospitals to get them out from under loved ones' care or just to help them out, not just for bad reasons but for good. Then a lot of folks said, "No, couldn't we do something more at the local level, and provide better care at the local level so we don't have to put people in snake pits and these large institutional centers?" So that pulling and hauling has been going on for a long time, but you saw a material shift away from institutionalizing people and bringing them back into the community with some success and a lot of failure, I think.

A lot of people now want their kids institutionalized where they think they may get better care, or may not. There's a lot of parents who feel that if they could institutionalized a mentally ill son or daughter they would be better off. But the courts now say if you're not harming yourself or others and you can provide that good defense, and some can, they're out in the street driving everybody crazy in turn.

LAGE: Many people attribute a lot of our homeless to that trend.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it is very frustrating that people have a right to act crazy, and if they're not harming themselves or others, they have a right to do that. Some have chosen that, believe it or not. Some parents have apparently lost every battle they've had trying to get health care for

their children. They say, "I don't want it. I feel fine. Get out of my life."

LAGE: Where a drug program might help.

WILLIAMS: Yes, or they may want to put them in a therapy center. And they say, "No." And I don't mean electroshock or anything else--to get some counseling. But the individual has a right to do what he wants. If I feel I'm Napoléon Bonaparte and I'm not harming anybody, I can walk up and down K Street wearing that uniform. You know, at one time you couldn't. The Lanterman-Petris-Short Act[1] came into being during.... That's another thing we should mention.

[Assemblyman] Frank Lanterman, who was a very conservative legislator from La Cañada, old-time family in California and fiscally conservative but not when it came for the developmentally disabled. He was working at that time on developing programs for the developmentally disabled. I think they came to fruition later on, but he saw the need to do more than we were doing. So even though this very fiscally conservative man was generally conservative in some areas, in this area he wanted to spend money. Somebody said one day, "Governor, I don't know if we can afford Frank much longer." [Laughter] Because he always held himself out as being as tight-fisted a person as you could find, but when it came to spending, there were people that felt strongly about it in one area.

LAGE: About certain issues.

WILLIAMS: Senator Clair [W.] Burgener, who later became a congressman--very conservative, very able legislator from San Diego--I think had a member of his family who was developmentally disabled. He had a direct interest in providing care for the developmentally disabled. Not to provide care for his child or family member, but he understood the problem and saw a need to do something. So we bring our personal experiences to the job, and even the most

1. S.B. 677, 1967 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1667.

conservative people sometimes want to spend money. So there's that pressure out there. I think the governor generally responded to helping people. I don't think he was as fiscally conservative as people thought he was. He would be tight on the budget but sign a lot of spending bills, not because he was a profligate or a wastrel but because I think he really was more caring than some of the people felt he was. His enemies didn't think he was. And those that wanted him to be uncaring, very conservative folks, were satisfied with this perception. I think he carried that on as president.

LAGE: Did you get a sense of what he may have taken a personal caring interest in? What kinds of things?

WILLIAMS: Well, I can't answer that. I always felt that he was probably more caring than anyone thought he was or presented him, because he was being packaged, too, by his supporters as being hard-nosed and going to watch the dollar, and I don't think he could really do that. If he knew that there was support needed for a program, they were going to get it. Sometimes he got bad advice. For example, someone said, "No, we have enough money in the crippled children services program," which is a superb program for kids. And we found out the advice we got from the department was absolutely wrong. They did run out of money, and his response was, "We have to do something. I'm not going to have children hurt because of that." I just didn't feel that he was a heartless creature that he's made out to be by folks. I don't think he ever held himself out to be a Rhodes scholar either, but he was a very real, down-to-earth, friendly person, who I think was more capable than his detractors assert. I wasn't around even while he was president, so I can't talk about that, but as governor I thought he could handle issues very well.

And it wasn't a matter of getting it scripted. I'll mention one other thing and that's all. This would happen over a period of years--whenever the budget wasn't ready, there's always some

crisis: they couldn't get the budget done on time for whatever disagreement, upstairs, downstairs. During one of these times, I remember he came in from Los Angeles late at night. Everybody was in briefing him, and they were doing it all at once. It was bedlam. I mean, if I were governor, I would have drawn a gun and said, "One at a time or I'm going to kill you all!" [Laughter] Or at least a couple of you. And he just. . . . People are rattling numbers at him. It was just not the way to do things, but everybody was trying to get it done because he had a press briefing in a few minutes and he had to fly in there and do it. He went in there and presented a coherent picture of the problem, listening to all this babble of voices. Now that wasn't just somebody scripting it for him. He had to listen to some facts, put them together in his head, and present them. So I just don't believe that Ronald Reagan is just handed this little script each day which he memorizes, and he carries on.

He spoke well. He was hard to beat when it came to make a speech. Every governor gets a lot of canned stuff. George Deukmejian gets. . . . You can almost tell what he's going to say, because he can't keep on saying something new every day.

LAGE: That's right.

WILLIAMS: Nobody can write that many speeches. So, I think he annoyed people because he was effective. He was an actor, and they didn't want him to be governor, and he seemed to be able to cope with things pretty well.

LAGE: Did you see changes over the eight years in sort of an awareness of how government works?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I think that happened. Particularly his staff. They were as inexperienced as he was, and there were some disruptions for one reason or another early on. They quit making the mistakes after a while. The silly little things, you know, that . . .

LAGE: Well, they had terrible relations with the legislature initially.

WILLIAMS: Yes. And I think that. . . . So did [President] Jimmy Carter. I think, you know, you're the outsiders and you're going to stay that way. I think the governor would have profited more by having a better relationship with the legislature. He probably did as well with the legislature as anyone else has.

LAGE: After . . .

WILLIAMS: After a while, yes. Initially, things were very disruptive because he wasn't hearing the proper advice, and he started hearing it.

LAGE: With the changes in his--what was he called, executive secretary?--from [Philip] Battaglia to [William P.] Clark, [Jr.] to Meese, would you see a reflection there from your point of view?

WILLIAMS: I would think that improved things. Battaglia was a very able guy. I knew him for the short time he was there and I was quite impressed with him. The other circumstances are of no moment. I thought the governor handled that with a great deal of grace at a time when people probably didn't understand that.

LAGE: You mean the issue.

WILLIAMS: The issue of homosexuals. I mean that was appalling to some people even though some legislators were homosexual. But here it came out and it was upsetting to a lot of folks. Today it would be less upsetting. And it shouldn't be, because there are members of staff every place that are gay.

LAGE: Sure.

WILLIAMS: And that's just a fact of life. That's true on Governor Deukmejian's staff. And that's not some dark, deep, hidden secret. They are competent, able people, and that's as far as you should go. But this time they got involved in some activity that was not appropriate, and Bill Clark, I think, was a stabilizing force. Ed Meese was too and provided a very strong leadership. Particularly Ed.

LAGE: Was there any change in the way that the whole operation took place that would effect your work?

WILLIAMS: No, except, you know, you knew who was in charge. You always knew that Ed was in charge. Bill Clark, I always knew that Bill

Clark was in charge. Because they were the players that I got to know, because the other people weren't around long enough. They're very strong chiefs of staff or executive secretaries, whatever you want to call them. And they ran things.

LAGE: You sound as if you were happy with the way the office was run, the governor's office.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. It was well organized. You knew how to get things done. The people were very open and you knew how to work things through it, and it worked pretty well.

LAGE: Going back to this earlier thing we talked about, part of your function or the function of your unit being to kind of keep the departments in line, was there unhappiness at the departmental level or areas where they tried to do end runs around the governor's office?

WILLIAMS: There probably was unhappiness if you've been doing what you pretty much wanted to do and suddenly somebody said, "No, you send us some material through that group and they'll send it to us," and so on. That inevitably arouses the ire of people who've been pretty much free-lancers.

LAGE: Were there certain departments who tended to free-lance this way?

WILLIAMS: Probably a few. [The Department of California] Highway Patrol, for example, always had people that wore two hats. They were very good at what they did. We'd get letters saying, "This bill was given to me by the Highway Patrol." I'd say, "We never gave you authority to give them that bill." "I didn't give them that bill. They wanted to know if we had any ideas on the subject." [Laughter] It's kind of not very subtle, but it worked, and it still goes on. Or members will go to a department and say, "I want to put a bill in on this subject. Will you draft it for me?" They say, "Look it, we're not sponsoring it." He says, "I know that." He writes a letter: "I got this information from the department. They sponsored it." The author wants to create the impression that there's some administration support for the bill.

LAGE: That there's unity. But that wasn't a major problem for your unit?

WILLIAMS: No, I don't think a major problem. Annoyance, yes. The program that is still in place was formally approved in cabinet--George Steffes presented it, the whole concept, to the cabinet and said "Can you buy it, because you're . . ."

LAGE: Now is this the concept of how . . .

WILLIAMS: How information was to flow from the departments to the agencies to the governor's office and back--the approval process, the review process, the whole works.

LAGE: So that all was conceptualized and presented . . .

WILLIAMS: It was developed in the Brown, Sr., administration and put in place informally and formalized in the Reagan administration, adopted by the cabinet. And we had a formal manual and everything developed. Gino Lera prepared that plan. George presented it and gave Gino all the credit, as he should have. George is a class act for that reason, at least from an employee's perspective. It takes a lot of courage to admit that other people do things, particularly in cabinets and the like. I remember once when a cabinet member came to me, he said, "Somebody complained about your unit, Bob." He said, "They'll never do it again. George attacked them for half an hour without repeating himself." [Laughter]

LAGE: That's great. So was there any controversy in its being accepted?

WILLIAMS: None whatsoever. The cabinet members thought it was a good idea, because, see, now you had in place formal structures at the agency level. If you're going to have an agency, it's got to have some function. So you had agencies that supervise each and every department under the governor's wing. They saw the need to present to the governor their view of the world, so they had to see it. Since they were on cabinet and the department heads weren't, they wanted to make sure that whatever idea the departments had they had a chance to look at. So it worked both ways. And there's still a mechanism. There was a mechanism then, there's a

mechanism now to work out disputes. So it isn't you muzzle one and let the other one talk.

LAGE: And that stayed in place you say through . . .

WILLIAMS: It's still in place, through Brown, Jr., and. . . . In fact, in the Brown, Jr., administration, I recall Senator [William] Campbell. He and Jerry Brown seemed to have a good relationship. And he said, "Jerry, you're not approving any positions." He was very slow in making decisions in his early months, even later, so the departments didn't have positions on bills. He said, "Jerry, why don't you just let them [the department heads] go up and let them speak their mind?" He said, "Bill, I'm willing to do that. It's a good idea. I'm going to let a thousand flowers bloom in this area, but you'll never know how I feel until I act on the bill." He [Campbell] said, "Well, no, I don't want to do that, Jerry." And he said, "Well, it's either got to be the way we're doing it now or your way." He [Campbell] said, "OK, let's keep it the way it is; I was just hoping you'd let them say anything they wanted and you might respond to it." Brown said, "No." He said, "Then I'm going to make my decision, and that will always be a private decision, and you'll never know until you get the veto message." He said, "Well, you don't want that either." So, while the governor was a little slow in clearing things, obviously there's some virtue in knowing where you stand.

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

WILLIAMS: The process has continued with remarkably little change except the color of the paper. For example, it was designed that each agency would have a colored paper: goldenrod for the Department of Finance, I guess for gold; green for the Agriculture and Services Agency; blue for the Business and Transportation (and now Housing) Agency; a yellow, not gold, for the Health and Welfare agency; and an orangey color for the Youth and Adult Corrections

Agency. So you could always identify who it was coming from just by color. There's some virtue in that. When they made a recommendation on a bill it turned pink; they're called pinks. When they recommend "sign" or "veto" when the bill's done they're all pink. So you can distinguish that, and they know what folders to put those in.

LAGE: I love the mind that developed this.

WILLIAMS: Well, it has worked very well. People are frustrated, but you want people, when they present their thoughts, to do it an organized way. So you format it so they're not. . . . Some people want to write it so you've got to read three pages to get one thought, when if you've got a format, you know where to go to find those thoughts and you can read it in a hurry.

LAGE: Did this make your job easier?

WILLIAMS: It made the job easier by doing that. And it made it easier for the governor who would look for that same kind of information and find it that way, because he knew the format.

LAGE: I also understand during Reagan's time they reduced the number of days he had to consider vetoes from thirty to twelve. Did that make a . . .

WILLIAMS: That's correct. Well, there was a substantial change during the Reagan administration. They had pocket vetoes during the Brown, Sr., administration, because at the end by doing nothing, at the very end where most of the bills came down, most of the tough bills, by doing nothing, if you didn't sign it and file it with the secretary of state, it was vetoed. You didn't have to send a message. Then you'd send out a press release: the following bills were pocket vetoed and you'd put down the reasons. You did that at your leisure.

Then when the annual session was put into place, the governor had a prescribed period in which to get the bills back. He had to return the bills within twelve days at the beginning of the session, and he had thirty days at the end. But he still had to act.

Because they could come back and consider his vetoes after they'd recessed. So you now didn't have a pocket veto anymore, and you had to take affirmative or negative action, prepare a veto message, and deliver it in a timely way.

LAGE: Well, this must have impacted your job.

WILLIAMS: Just more work load, yes, more work load. But most of the vetoes are still at the end, because most of the tough bills come down at the end. He had a few vetoes at the front end of the session.

LAGE: Did you continue this process of bringing in people at the end of the session to . . .

WILLIAMS: No. We cut it down to. . . . That doesn't work. You've got to watch the bills as they go through and have an understanding of what's happening and then that way you can do it.

LAGE: You get a jump on it.

WILLIAMS: You get a jump on it. You know where you're going. And people know who to call, and pretty soon you're better informed than a mass of people are. For a while we used, in the Brown, Sr., administration, program and policy staff from [the Department of] Finance. They were the think tank, if you will. They liked to think, but they didn't like to work on these bills all night long. So Gino Lera and I generally did all the bills.

LAGE: That's a big job, for the two of you.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LAGE: Another change that I came across was taking all the bills that were sort of procedural and putting them into one--the maintenance of the code measures. Do you want to talk about that? Referring to the maintenance of the code measures?

WILLIAMS: Well, maintenance codes consolidate into one bill every year.

LAGE: I see. So wasn't that something new during the Reagan administration?

WILLIAMS: No. I don't know how long code maintenance has been around, but the legislative counsel goes through changes that are correcting the spelling of words without making a substantive change in the law,

without changing it at all except to clean it up. That's a minor thing. I think code maintenance has been around longer than Reagan.

LAGE: So that's nothing significant?

WILLIAMS: That's a bill that is housekeeping in the truest sense of the word.

LAGE: Here's another kind of procedural thing that I came across. I don't know whether it's significant, and I didn't quite understand it, actually. It was a *California Journal* article referring to letters the governor writes before the budget bill is enacted to justify some special appropriations.

WILLIAMS: They're emergency letters; they're called emergency letters. The constitution gives the governor some protection by saying that generally no appropriation can be approved prior to the budget bill being approved by the governor unless the governor states there is an emergency to justify the bill coming down prior to the enactment of the budget. That's so you don't have appropriations flowing down while the budget's being considered. That's just a bad way to handle fiscal problems. The budget's supposed to be the central focus in a fiscal sense. But there could be an emergency appropriation in every sense of the word. And the governor has to give what they call an emergency letter pursuant to the constitution.

In the early days, during the Reagan years, you had to give it while the bill was being considered in the fiscal committees: Ways and Means or Appropriations. The constitution was further amended when they went to the two-year cycle to say it has to be given at any time, but it can't come down, can't be delivered to the governor, until the budget's been signed, or unless they get a letter before that. And so they'd be calling for emergency letters. And so the first thing we check, is there an emergency? Does the bill have an urgency clause? Sometimes they didn't have an urgency clause. They wouldn't have been effective until January. There's clearly no emergency, so they held those bills until after the budget was

enacted. You can't assert emergency when there isn't one. In other cases there were truly emergencies. They needed money for particular programs then and there to make payroll.

LAGE: So this would be something the legislature would be requesting.

WILLIAMS: They'd be requesting and we watched . . .

LAGE: Did the governor ever have to request?

WILLIAMS: We stayed on top of it. I knew what bills required emergency letters, because I dealt with the engrossing and enrolling clerks, and the chief clerk and secretary of the senate I dealt with all the time, so they'd warn me. And I knew what bills were coming down anyhow, because I watched every day. You know, I'd check the desk.

LAGE: What was the term you used? Engrossing and enrolling? What are those?

WILLIAMS: Well, engrossment is the process by which the original bill and each amendment to it is checked to make sure it conforms to what happened. They paste everything together in this several-sheet document, and that's the work product they look to, and as amendments are made, they make sure those amendments are properly reflected in the printed bill. When the bill has passed both houses and is ready to go to the governor, it goes through what they call the enrollment process, the final process. Let me see if I can find an enrolled bill here. [Refers to his file] I can't find a bill here. But the enrolled bill is in bond paper with signature blocks and a signature block for the governor. That bill is proofed again to make sure it conforms to the bill that was introduced and each succeeding amendment.

LAGE: So you'd keep in touch with the engrossing and enrolling clerks?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and then they deliver the bills to us and we sign for them.

LAGE: Did you deal with the legislature in other ways? Did you ever deal with legislative staff?

WILLIAMS: Well, you deal with legislators and legislative staff when their bills come down. It depends, you know; if they get to know you, they'll

call. A member will call and say. . . . [Richard] Dick Lloyd, for example, during this past administration. He is an outspoken sort of individual, and I think he's always wondered, "Is he vetoing my bills because he doesn't like me, or is he vetoing my bills because he doesn't like the bill?" It was my view that that was the case: he vetoed the bills because he didn't like his bills. He would be very candid and say, "Well, I've got a bill that's really important to me." And I said, "Well, he signed that one." He said, "That's great. Thank you." He was always very open. Then the next day he'd blast the governor. [Laughter]

LAGE: But you didn't seem to be the person in the legislative unit who was dealing with the legislature.

WILLIAMS: I wasn't lobbying them. No, I dealt with a lot of legislators, but I wasn't dealing with them in the sense . . .

LAGE: Not as a lobbyist or as a negotiator to develop some agreement.

WILLIAMS: No, no, except in a rare, rare instance.

LAGE: OK. I'm looking to see what else I'm missing. Most of the things I've thought of about the Reagan and Pat Brown administrations, we've covered.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I think so.

LAGE: Do you have anything that we have . . .

WILLIAMS: I have nothing startling or new or even humorous to say. Although Governor Brown was in town yesterday, Pat Brown.

LAGE: I read that.

WILLIAMS: Eighty-five years old. He looks tremendous. I didn't see him yesterday, but he just looks great.

LAGE: Yes, when I've seen him most recently, it's amazing.

WILLIAMS: A group of deputy legislative counsels, all of them very junior to him in point of service--I mean, they have no memory of his administration; they're all younger people--and he spoke to them, and I thought they were just enthralled.

[Interruption]

WILLIAMS: Pat Brown is remembered as an eager to please, old-time Irish politician. Probably a very misleading view. A lot of people want to please people. You know, you don't want to go through life with 90 percent of the people hating you when you get through. I remember one person came to me and said, "Pat told me that he wouldn't have vetoed the bill had he known what I just told him." I said, "Do you believe that?" He said, "No, but it sounded great." [Laughter] He laughed. He roared. He said, "Pat's that way." And, you know, it was a gentle way of handling the problem.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Session 2, May 9, 1990]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

LAGE: Last time we talked about the Pat Brown administration and the Reagan, and we said there were a couple of stories that we forgot to cover, having to do with Vern Sturgeon and [Senator] Hugh [M.] Burns and Unruh. And so should we start out with those?

WILLIAMS: Sure. I think they're interesting because they really highlight some of the things that were going on at the capitol at that time.

One story, one happening, if you will, was that Hugh Burns was the president pro tem of the senate, and during the governor's and lieutenant governor's absence acted as governor and signed and vetoed bills.

LAGE: And did that happen very often, that they were both out of the state?

WILLIAMS: It happened infrequently. In this case, the governor and the lieutenant governor were at the Republican National Convention together, and so the president pro tem was then acting governor. He came down to the governor's office and informally set up shop and appointed Vern Sturgeon his executive secretary. Vern was the legislative secretary at that point. And [Edwin J.] Ed Gray, who was an associate press secretary, was appointed press secretary, thus I think annoying both the executive secretary and the press secretary at the same time. Ed later became one of the principal regulators in the savings and loan business. He's been the focus of a lot of controversy in the [Alan] Cranston matter. Senator Cranston has accused him of something or other. I don't know. Each has accused the other of wrongdoing, or indifference, or what

have you. But Ed at that point was still, later became the press secretary, but he was the number two person in that office. But the senator appointed him as his press secretary. He did it, I think, because he had a sense of humor and he knew the people who were involved in the real jobs were probably getting upset, because they were getting to believe maybe he's going to change the locks as well. [Laughter]

LAGE: Right.

WILLIAMS: That was not his intention, and he was a very conservative Democrat from Fresno and probably more conservative than the governor. He set himself up in what is now the Ronald Reagan Cabinet Room, which is a big room right outside the governor's office, and he said, "Be sure to put the bills in two piles: the ones you want me to veto, the ones you want me to sign." He said, "Don't get them mixed up, because I will do it." I said, "Senator, what if there's a Hugh Burns bill in the veto pile?" He said, "I just told you, one pile for the signs and one pile for the vetoes."

LAGE: So he just carried on with that.

WILLIAMS: And carried on. Now, I think he had a veto or two, and he didn't have any of his own bills, but he sincerely meant what he said. He wasn't going to use the time available to him to undo something that the governor would have done.

LAGE: Did that happen with other pro tems?

WILLIAMS: It happened with Senator [James R.] Mills during the Brown, Jr., administration. There was a brief moment when both he and the lieutenant governor were out of state for different reasons--I mean for different events or occurrences. He was able to have a ceremony on a bill of his that he wanted to sign. That had been worked out in advance.

LAGE: So it's a pretty friendly kind of thing.

WILLIAMS: It is a friendly transaction because--I'll be very candid with you--had the pro tem said, "No, I want to come in and do what I want to do, and I see several bills that I think the governor might veto that I

want to sign." Then we would resist it and would prevent them from doing it. We'd get the governor back, the lieutenant governor or governor back into state, and modern travel being what it is, you can do that with relative ease. We did do that with Lieutenant Governor [Mike] Curb.

LAGE: Now, what was that situation?

WILLIAMS: Well, lieutenant governor, of course, is the next in line. His staff people wanted to work out an arrangement to make all the bills available immediately to the lieutenant governor whenever the governor [Jerry Brown] wasn't available. And you know, there was passive resistance to it, and we never got to the point of a lawsuit or a confrontation.

LAGE: They felt that legally he should be right in there?

WILLIAMS: Legally, well the supreme court ruled on the matter of the governor's disability while he was out of state and also alluded to the fact that over the years lieutenant governors and occasionally president pro tems had signed a large number of bills as acting governor. The governor at that moment was asserting that, because of the fact of modern transportation, he really wasn't disabled and the lieutenant governor couldn't do anything. The supreme court didn't buy that at all and said that as to making appointments he could make them and the governor could come back and undo them if he wished, if he could.

So Curb did sign some bills. It was done voluntarily and in an organized way, and the governor I thought was very cooperative with the lieutenant governor. Then later on as the battling started, they were trying to work out a system whereby we would make all the bills available. That never happened. You can always assert that we don't agree with your conclusions of law and force you to go to court and get an order or something.

LAGE: And by that time the governor would be back.

WILLIAMS: The governor would be back in state. It never has been a problem where they've asserted dominion over the bills and would come in and take everything away.

LAGE: There's not usually that much of a pressure of time.

WILLIAMS: No. The other, I might add jumping ahead, [Lieutenant] Governor [Leo T.] McCarthy has never asserted some superior right and has always stood available to assist the governor if he needed something done on a bill if that was his wish. He has never asserted that he had some legal right to act during the governor's absence.

LAGE: So he's just there to step in.

WILLIAMS: He is there if the governor says, "Could you do these?" And he has, by the way. But it has not been the lieutenant governor asserting some right and authority over the bills or some other . . .

LAGE: Even though they're of different parties?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I think they respect each other and respect process, perhaps more than Curb did. That's just my view though.

LAGE: The other incident that Vern Sturgeon referred to in his oral history had to do with sort of getting Unruh's goat when Hugh Burns was acting governor.

WILLIAMS: Well, that's. . . . Hugh Burns, again, was acting about the same time, I believe, he was still acting as governor or acting as governor again, and at that point in time the constitution provided that if there was a dispute between the houses as to date of adjournment--they didn't have the formal process that we have today--the governor could adjourn the legislature once the dispute was established. Well, the assembly said they intended to adjourn on one day certain; the senate wanted to adjourn on another date certain. And Hugh Burns being the acting governor proclaimed that there was a dispute and adjourned both houses and outraged the assembly headed by Jesse Unruh as speaker. It also created some problems: pleased the senate no end and outraged the assembly no end, because there was a battle royal between [the assembly and] Hugh Burns and his chief lieutenants, principally

[Senator] George Miller, [Jr.], who couldn't stand, I think, some of the leadership people in the assembly. And so they were pleased.

But at the time the legislature was adjourned the assembly had before it a number of major bills that labor and management had worked out on the workers' comp [compensation] reform area. It was terribly important to both sides to get these bills passed. So the assembly continued working past the date set for adjournment, concurred in the amendments that the senate had made, attempted to deliver the bills to us, the enrolled bills, and [James] Jim Driscoll, the chief clerk of the assembly, brought them down. We refused to accept them. Jim trudged back to the assembly and told his leadership people, "They won't take them."

LAGE: Were these bills that the Reagan administration didn't want?

WILLIAMS: Oh no. These were bills that the Reagan administration did want and represented a compromise, but the action had been taken on them after the date of adjournment.

LAGE: So this had some substantive, more than just a little . . .

WILLIAMS: It really creates a very substantial problem because you can assert, well, maybe Hugh Burns didn't have that authority or it wasn't exercised properly or that there wasn't a dispute or any number of things, but you certainly jeopardize the bills that were passed. The assembly in short order said, "OK. They did this crazy thing and we're outraged by it in turn, but we're going to. . . ." The governor called them into special session and they passed the bills.

LAGE: I see.

WILLIAMS: So that problem was resolved, but Hugh Burns had his day in the sun by adjourning the other house.

LAGE: Now did you get called in as a consultant, a legal consultant, on that?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I was involved in that. Yes, we were up in the senator's office and working on it.

LAGE: What would have been your role?

WILLIAMS: Going over all the documents and everything. Everybody was there. It was more a political decision than a legal one, and obviously I'm not making the political ones. But Vern was there and both he and Senator Burns had been in the senate together. Even though of different parties, they respected each other. Burns was not partisan. I mean he knew how to exercise his role as pro tem, but he liked the members around him and got along well with everybody.

LAGE: Did they do this with a sense of good humor, or was this really kind of a . . .

WILLIAMS: Some sense of good humor. Some people. . . . I don't think anybody treated it as anything funny. I think the coming down and acting as governor and signing bills, he found that to be humorous and treated it that way. Others didn't and probably were a little uptight. This was not a criticism of people, but he sensed that people in the Reagan administration saw him in a different way and were not totally trustful of what he was doing when in fact he was just saying, "Look, I'll do your bidding." And they . . .

LAGE: Especially if the Reagan administration kind of distrusts the legislature at the time . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, and had some fear that this man was going to come in and do violence to what is going on. And I don't think Hugh was going to make them feel comfortable. I think Vern got some pleasure out of it too, because Vern always had a very good sense of humor and a real sense of people.

LAGE: And he was comfortable with the legislature.

WILLIAMS: He was comfortable with the legislature and probably found them easier to deal with than probably some staff members who really were more rigid and didn't understand what was happening. And I don't think anybody helped them either. They just wanted to let them swing in the breeze a little out there.

LAGE: [Laughter] So it was partly a little maneuver on some of these . . .

WILLIAMS: It was a bit of a byplay that went on that was intended to be in good humor and supportive of the governor. For example, there were lobbyists sitting at one end of the table waiting to go out to lunch with Hugh Burns. You know, it was a setting that didn't seem to fit the Reagan mold.

LAGE: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So [Michael] Mike Deaver was there and others, you know, standing around a little nervous and agitated and wondering, "What's going on?" But it was going on in high good humor and being done very properly, by the way. Because Hugh Burns made sure it was done that way. But he wasn't going to give these people the satisfaction, who we sensed were a little uptight with his presence and the fact that some lobbyists were hanging around, not looking over his shoulder but at the other end of the room discretely waiting for him so they could go out and have lunch together, as was his practice. So, you know, it was not the traditional tightly-scheduled Reagan way of doing things. I think the governor would have enjoyed it immensely. I think some of his staff members found it more difficult to deal with. That's just my view, but I think I'm right.

LAGE: That's an interesting sidelight on things. Is there any more that you thought about after last week that you'd want to add on the Reagan administration?

WILLIAMS: No, I don't think so. I've done some thinking. Other than these two incidents, I don't think so.

LAGE: Well, let's move into the Jerry Brown years. How did you happen to carry over into that administration?

WILLIAMS: Well, you might think it gets easier because if you'd worked for the father you probably could work for the son. At least, you'd have an entre.

LAGE: At least they're in the same party.

WILLIAMS: Yes, same party, at least. Now that I've picked up experience in each party, you feel that your path to continued work is a little

easier. I'm not sure if that's the case, because I didn't know the son from anybody. I mean I knew him as a candidate, but I had no contact with him while his father was governor.

LAGE: Or while he was secretary of state?

WILLIAMS: Well, I had contact with his immediate aides, and they came over and had roles in the administration, but I had no contact with him. They wanted to know, how our office worked and how bills were processed. They were inventive people, and they were looking for new and expanded roles for the secretary of state, and there's nothing wrong with that. But I didn't know him really except for the role he played as secretary of state, but I didn't know him beyond that. And had little contact with any of the children in the family except one. But Gray Davis was the . . .

LAGE: Chief of staff?

WILLIAMS: Chief of staff. I want to call it executive secretary. He wouldn't like that. That's the old title. The chief of staff apparent, and he was kidding when he said that I came with the furniture. He said, "You're probably the only one that's guaranteed to have a job here." That's overstating it obviously, and I knew that. But there didn't seem to be any problem.

LAGE: Did he know your work? Was he one of the ones who knew you before?

WILLIAMS: Well, I don't think. . . . He got to know the processes very fast, but like every new administration, you have an army of people that come through the door all aspiring to some role, sometimes a very uncertain role, or looking for something in the administration. It's like it's organized, but it looks like people are hanging around looking for something. They start filling posts in the governor's office, identified positions like the legal affairs secretary, the legislative secretary, the cabinet secretary, and pretty soon other people suddenly find themselves without any meaningful role or title, and they head out to a department or an agency or back . . .

LAGE: So it could well be that they had somebody of their own that they might want to put in your place?

WILLIAMS: Yes, but I was told otherwise.

LAGE: And did you want to stay on?

WILLIAMS: Oh, sure. Ignorance is bliss. You don't know what the next administration is going to be, and you don't. I had no conception of how the governor would act. It became apparent that it was not going to be the way the former administration acted or the way his father acted or any other governor in the history of the state had acted, as far as I could tell.

LAGE: Can you describe some of the things? How did you build up your picture of what it was going to be like?

WILLIAMS: Well, you began to realize there was no such thing as a schedule. If there was a hint of a schedule, that meant if someone had an 8:00 A.M. meeting with the governor, it was more likely to be at 8:00 P.M. and they would wait the full time. And I know somebody that did that and has been very bitter about it and has kept it with him all of his life, and I don't think it's worth it to do that. It's very frustrating because it holds people in place too much. The governor just didn't believe in a schedule, and efforts to schedule him as such, as most governors whether it be Governor Pat Brown or Ronald Reagan or George Deukmejian or anyone else, he just resisted the idea that he was trapped by the schedule-maker, and would make life difficult for anybody that thought they were on schedule.

LAGE: Now your office had functioned in a very orderly manner. I mean your own particular unit within the governor's office. Did that change?

WILLIAMS: Well, not really. He approached legislation differently in his first years. It was part of a learning process, because he could take a bill, and this bill maybe made a minor change in a program, and he'd want to learn about the program, get the details.

LAGE: So you'd take him in a bill to sign, or not sign . . .

WILLIAMS: And you find out that he knew the bill was routine, but he might have a feeling that the program was not a good one, so why fool around with it. So you had to spend [time] getting information on the program more than the details of the bill because the bill in fact was routine.

LAGE: So were there times you went in to tell him about the bill and got questioned about things you couldn't answer?

WILLIAMS: And then you went back. . . . Sure, there are a lot of things you can't answer. [Laughter] Incredible number of things you can't answer, but you always had the resources to come back. Or you'd call a member. In this case the first bill he had to sign was by [Assemblyman] Howard [L.] Berman--well, one of the earliest bills. And Howard was a close friend. He was giving Howard Berman a bad time about the bill. He said, "Jerry, it's just a simple bill. I don't know what your problem is!" And Howard Berman's a very practical legislator and I think to the end never figured out why he got so many phone calls about the nuances of relatively easy bills. But that's how he was early on.

LAGE: Did this frustrate you? Was it . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, it frustrates you, particularly when you have a lot of bills to do. But I noticed that by the month of--he started, you know, in office in January . . .

LAGE: And the legislature was already in session.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes, going full tilt.

LAGE: So you must have had kind of a back log.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes, everything keeps going. He had different approaches to things that you couldn't anticipate. He didn't like. . . . He wanted to know why a bill had an urgency cause when there was no real evidence of urgency, so he'd veto it, things that nobody did in the past too often. Or we had two bills that were identical, and instead of just signing both and placating both authors, he vetoed one and said he did it by the flip of a coin.

LAGE: [Laughter] Did you ever see him flip the coin?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. He flipped it. Or someone flipped it. He didn't believe in doing it. Someone flipped it and they called it, and he said, "OK, this bill is going to be signed; this bill is going to be vetoed." You know, those kinds of things that excited the interests of the press. He would start fairly early in the morning and work very late at night, and his immediate advisors would stay with him until 1:00 or 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. None of them had any interest in the traditional values of rest or three meals a day or anything else. [Laughter] And, you know, meals were caught on the run and . . .

LAGE: Now did you get caught up in that schedule?

WILLIAMS: I'd get caught up in it enough, but I found that you can't function too well if by the end of the week you're on your knees from exhaustion. You know you've got to do it every day. And he knew that, too. So I remember one occasion when things had settled in and everybody knew their role in the world. It was about midnight, and we're talking about the bills, but the discussion had deteriorated. There wasn't a coherent thought coming out of anyone's mouth. I said, "I think we should start in the morning, because I don't think we're getting anywhere." That was the most pleasant way I could put it. And they all, "Yea, well I know you're tired and you've got to go home." And he said, "And we'll start up in the morning." And I said, "That isn't what I meant." I said, "You're not making any sense." [Laughter] And they all keep, you know, chanting, "No, if you can't handle it, go on home."

So it was good natured but with the understanding they had reached a point where it was hard to focus on what was before them. They wanted to just sit down and have some philosophical discussions, which are more appropriate, and I understand that. The governor enjoyed that, and his immediate aides--[J. Anthony] Tony Kline, who was the legal affairs secretary, Marc Poché, who was the legislative secretary--and others that would come in would devote a lot of time with the governor.

These are associations that are different than the associations perhaps that, certainly different than Ronald Reagan, who found himself with aides that he really didn't have any ties with. Jerry Brown on the other hand had seminary ties, undergraduate ties . . .

LAGE: Which of these people, what kind of ties did they have?

WILLIAMS: Well, Marc Poché, for example, was Jerry Brown's dormitory master, if you will, at Santa Clara. Tony Kline, Rose [Elizabeth] Bird, and Jerry Brown got to know each other at the I House at Berkeley. The fire marshal was a high school classmate of the governor who became a lieutenant in the fire department in San Francisco, and he respected him. It wasn't just boyhood friendships or college friendships; it was just people he respected. A couple of seminarians, the former seminarians--and not from the same seminary necessarily, but seminarians nonetheless--one of the first secretaries of Business and Transportation and Housing [Donald E. Burns]. In fact, the person [Baxter Rice] who became the governor's ABC [Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control] director was a fellow seminarian. Yale [University] Law School brought, I think, Tony Kline. I think they both went to Yale together.

So he brought people that he had some contact with, either through earlier friendships or through contacts in college or university setting. And they were friends; they weren't just. . . . They were close friends. It was not the formal relationship I was used to where it was Governor this and Governor that. It was Jerry this and Jerry that. That was impossible for me to do--I never did it. But they were in fact close friends and respected him and respected his office. It wasn't some casual, you know, we're just buddies and we're having sort of a talk session. They all respected the governor and his role and admired him.

LAGE: Did they defer to him then?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes.

LAGE: Because he was governor even though they . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes. And he would remind them from time to time he had to make the final decision no matter how they felt. And so you had that kind of unstructured existence, which makes it difficult to do things on a given day.

LAGE: And they were not only friends but friends from outside government.

WILLIAMS: Yes. For example, Tony worked in a public law setting, public interest law firm. While Tony's early years out of Yale were with one of the prestigious New York law firms, probably what his folks expected him to do in life and become a partner and very successful--and there was every reason he would have been, by the way; he was a very brilliant person. If you were trying to find someone who looks like a Russian bomb thrower, that's Tony. I mean, you know, he had this fierce look and a beard and dark faced and he had that look. You know, any minute he's going to come right out of one of the early days of the revolution in Russia. And yet he was very gentle, and that fierce appearance wasn't really very real. He was a very caring, concerned individual who I think just had an appearance. He was bald-headed, too, so he looked a little like, not like Lenin, but the same kind of, you know, appearance. Lenin was probably a little less fierce looking. [Laughter]

By the way, Tony now is.... He remarried. He is in the First District Court of Appeal as a presiding judge and has two children, and he's just proud as punch. He has all the traditional values. And so, you know, these people are not what they always appear to be. A very fine person. Very bright.

LAGE: How about Gray Davis?

WILLIAMS: Gray was different than perhaps the other people in the office in terms of association. I think he came to know the governor through campaigns, and I can't tell you how they first met. But Gray had the rather difficult duty of running things.

LAGE: How did he. . . . He was the one who was supposed to make the schedule, I would assume.

WILLIAMS: Yes, make a schedule. He tried to become press secretary, tried to be, you know, the spokesperson for the office instead of the press secretary, and tried to keep everything glued together, because you've got these people who are buddies of the governor. And how far do you press to keep everybody going in the same direction? It's difficult. If they're all strangers to the governor, you probably exercise a greater degree of control over everybody. "This is how we march, you know. Don't wander in there to see him. We've got a schedule. What are you hanging around there all night long for? What are you doing that I don't know about?" You know, that kind of thing. So he had a tough job, very difficult job, and it was harder for him than other executive secretaries or chiefs of staff to do the job, because the governor just didn't like the order and the discipline that other governors are willing to endure.

LAGE: He [Gray Davis] must have been very patient to continue to . . .

WILLIAMS: Patience is not one of his strong suits. [Laughter] He would tell you that. I'm quite sure he was at times very volatile, and he'd just try to get. . . . You know, it's hard to work in that setting and then when things go wrong it just seems to compound it, and he would get exercised and blow up. He's calmed down since he's been in the assembly and in his present office [state controller], but he's not an easygoing person. I don't think he would assert that, even now.

LAGE: That must have been difficult for him.

WILLIAMS: Yes, a difficult task. Anybody that held the job would be frustrated by it.

LAGE: Now, was it difficult for you to kind of fit in to this unstructured setting and also all the chums?

WILLIAMS: Well, I thought it would be difficult because all the nice orderly things had disappeared: there are not going to be any more cabinet meetings or a process by which to review. We tried one of them one day, and that was a class A failure.

LAGE: Tried a cabinet meeting?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and we gave up on that right away. That was one of the more . . .

LAGE: Now who tried? When you say we tried . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, they wanted to consider bills and bring some bills up in cabinet.

LAGE: As you'd done in the Reagan . . .

WILLIAMS: . . . and we couldn't get past the first bill.

LAGE: Too much discussion?

WILLIAMS: Yes, too much discussion and too much. . . . Oh, it just got out of hand with the governor demonstrating he could really jam the process, because he sure didn't want cabinet meetings. He wanted to pick the people he met with and he wanted to pick the time. He didn't want something regular: I'm going to have to be there every day at a certain time and listen to all these people talk. He wanted to run things, and he did.

LAGE: What did you do with your unit then? How did you go about getting the bills ready to present to the governor?

WILLIAMS: Well, happily, initially Paul Halvonik and Marc Poché were the legislative secretaries.

LAGE: Did they divide the assembly and senate?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Insanity continued for a brief period. They all learn after a while, but happily both Marc and Paul are just remarkable human beings. Paul is perhaps even a more complicated person, and he probably would assert that. He had a piano in his office; he was a musician, an accomplished musician. He wrote beautifully. You'd read his briefs in appellate court cases, and they're just works of art. I have the highest regard for him. He unfortunately lost his court of appeal seat because his wife persisted in growing marijuana at home.

LAGE: I remember that.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and he said it was a choice between going home and living in a hotel, and he decided to opt to go home. And that's too bad

because I liked them both. They were neat people. I'm very conservative, and I thought the world of them.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

[Begin Tape 4, Side B]

LAGE: You were saying how much you liked the Halvoniks.

WILLIAMS: I found that probably a brighter bunch of people I'd never met, and very tolerant of other people's views.

LAGE: Are you talking about everybody now or Paul and his wife?

WILLIAMS: I'm talking about everybody. I'm talking about virtually everybody I dealt with. There was a rare one that couldn't find the time to listen, or yell at you and say you're wrong but let it go at that. Because they were in a position, if they wanted to cross you, I guess, to do it in fine style and just say, "Jerry, that guy's an idiot. Get rid of him." That never happened. That isn't the way they did business. They would take you on head on and you knew, but they never did it behind your back, which I always felt was . . .

LAGE: Did Gino Lera stay on?

WILLIAMS: Yes, Gino Lera was there.

LAGE: And how did you two divide things up?

WILLIAMS: Well, we divided things up, because he was really program oriented. He really could work. . . . He worked with Finance on fiscal bills--he loved that. So we worked on enrolled bills together and we divided the work up that way.

LAGE: He took the fiscally oriented bills?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and he would make sure they got approved properly and go and check them out with everybody. He loved it.

LAGE: Check with the various departments?

WILLIAMS: No, no. They'd come in and he'd check with the legislative secretary and make sure everything was consistent as best we could tell with the administration. On a given day that was hard to know how the governor felt, because it wasn't known to us. I'm talking now more about things early on.

LAGE: Yes, you didn't know what . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, you didn't know precisely where the governor was coming from, and it frustrated everyone because the departments didn't know how to respond, but that changed with the passage of time. It never got totally satisfactory, but it never does. I don't care who the governor is.

LAGE: Did you both take bills in to the governor? Or were you the one who did most of that?

WILLIAMS: No, we both did. I did more than most, but he was around most of the time, because he knew a lot of the health bills very well. He was an expert in the health area.

LAGE: Is this Gino?

WILLIAMS: Gino, yes. As were other people in the office. The governor, for whatever reason, you put labels on people, and then he would ignore the labels and go to whoever he felt would give him the best information. So if he was more comfortable with A he'd go to A, instead of maybe more properly to B. So B gets annoyed because he or she thinks the governor should be dealing with him or her and not the subordinate employee. [Laughter] And that creates problems. And he tended to do that, but that was just part of the way he operated, and it was part of the way you got used to doing business.

LAGE: Or you didn't stay.

WILLIAMS: Yes, if you couldn't cope with that. He wasn't going to change to suit you, and I don't think he ever planned to. So people got used to his lifestyle, and while the first six to nine months of the administration would just seem to be, you know, you met yourself coming and going because there's no free time, and it was late at night all the time, it still got done.

And I remember at the end, the last bill signed on the first year, that gave us a brief respite. He said, "What are you going to do next?" We were over at David's Brass Rail and I think he was having a glass of wine or something, nothing stronger than that,

maybe a beer. All of his people around him still waiting, going to have another all night session. I said, "I'm going to go home to my family." It seemed that there were only a few of us who were in that position. [Laughter] Everybody else was single or going to soon be single if they kept it up. Nobody was, I can tell you, doing anything improper because they had no time to.

And Marc Poché was married and he would go home on the weekends. And Marc looked grayer every day of the week as the week progressed. By the time he hit Friday he looked like he was ready to collapse. And I said, "What do you do on the weekends, Marc?" He said, "I go home and I sleep virtually the entire weekend." He said, "I'm with my family, they barely see me, and then I get in the car and drive back to Sacramento Monday and start it all over again."

LAGE: Oh! He didn't last too long, did he?

WILLIAMS: I can't tell you how long. He didn't last terribly long, but when he left the legislature gave him a strong send-off, and the governor said, "Gee, Marc is really well liked, isn't he?" He was sort of wondering why he was, and I said, "You know why he's well liked. He was just respected by everybody." He was a gentleman. He was fronting for a governor who was. . . . They were yelling at him all the time about the governor, and, you know, he could handle that. He's on the court of appeal. I wish he were on the supreme court, but he and Rose [Bird] didn't get along, and he's really a very fine person in every respect. A nice family, and he raised carrier pigeons, and he'd bring them here to Sacramento and let them go and they'd go back to San Jose. You know, a very bright and able person, and thoughtful and caring and respected by both Republicans and Democrats. The governor didn't always understand that kind of behavior. But he respected Marc. I just wish that Marc were on the supreme court. That's just my private view, but it is my view nonetheless.

LAGE: Because you think he's so astute, I take it?

WILLIAMS: Yes. He would have done well. I think he'd function well in that court.

LAGE: Did you see a lot of Rose Bird when she was in the administration?

WILLIAMS: Yes, she played a very significant role in the administration. A very strong person. Before you think I'm just attacking Rose Bird, I worked for Marc so I. . . . You know, sometimes our office was in an adversary position with Rose Bird because she was the head of the Agriculture and Services Agency and would find that Marc was not agreeing with her positions on bills. And she'd do battle on that issue, so you have confrontation.

LAGE: How would that get resolved now, because Marc's role was to take some feedback from the agencies?

WILLIAMS: Yes, but he was the legislative secretary, and you could assert that he had a better chance of, you know, could just turn down the positions. And then she'd have to come back and fight them. So you do have, on some issues you'd have a battling. I don't think she enjoyed that, having anybody change her positions. That just . . .

LAGE: Well, then, would both of them end up going to the governor?

WILLIAMS: Yes, that could happen. I think--you know, I'm stating my own personal view and no one else's; certainly not Marc's assertion--but I think she found it difficult. I have substantial evidence of that.

LAGE: Elaborate a little more. You're implying more than you're saying.

WILLIAMS: Well, she found it difficult when people crossed her, which she perceived as crossing her in the sense that reversed what she wanted to do, so that was difficult. She didn't like it.

LAGE: She didn't accept that too well.

WILLIAMS: Didn't accept it gracefully at all. And I'm not expecting her to. She just was a strong person and just found it difficult. I think there was substantial evidence that she felt the legislative unit was trying to undo what she was doing, which I'm not sure that was always the case. But, you know . . .

LAGE: Would the issues be over Marc's view of the best way to develop some legislation or his view of what the legislature would pass?

WILLIAMS: Or it could be on a very minor matter. You know, big things like farm labor and everything, she was working directly with the governor on. So we're not talking about the grand design, but when she put Rose Bird on that document, she didn't want to find out that there was another person putting an initial on it saying no.

LAGE: I see, so it might have been a small matter.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it could be a small issue, yes.

LAGE: And would Marc be considering what the legislature wanted or what he thought would make a good bill?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he would just have a different point of view. I think he had a better perception of that than she did. That's just my view.

LAGE: Was part of your role to write some legislation? When there was a program they were developing, would it be part of your role to help get the language?

WILLIAMS: We did that rarely. We had other people do it. We really didn't get into bill drafting. It takes a lot of time, and you really don't have time to do it. But I have done it. When there was something that the governor wanted done, we gave it to the department, it came back wrong, so I rewrote it, and then I just went to an author, found a bill, and appeared and testified on behalf of the bill. That's such a rare occurrence I remember it.

LAGE: So that wasn't your usual.

WILLIAMS: No.

LAGE: But would you analyze bills that the department had written in the same way that you analyze bills that came up from the legislature?

WILLIAMS: Yes, because we had to review all of the proposals by the departments before they introduce them.

LAGE: So you might be in the position of having to tell Rose Bird that this wasn't well written.

WILLIAMS: This wasn't a good idea.

LAGE: Or wasn't a good idea.

WILLIAMS: This wasn't something that should be introduced. And that's annoying, too. What somebody's telling you, then, is that our

judgment's better than yours, when you already feel your judgment's one of the better ones around. That's a healthy thing, you know, that people feel good about their own decisions.

LAGE: Sure. Well, can you remember any instances, say, where Rose Bird and Marc would have to go to the governor and . . .

WILLIAMS: No, I can't. I know there was this feeling on the part of the staff, and it was real, that there was this problem. So, you know, it was a source of turmoil, not something that overwhelmed you, but I was aware of it.

LAGE: Just something you couldn't forget.

WILLIAMS: But, again, you have to realize that I worked in that unit and I worked for Marc, so I was his partisan. And so my comments are colored in that respect.

LAGE: Was Governor Brown very supportive of Rose Bird overall? Did they remain close?

WILLIAMS: Well, I think it's difficult when you've got two people you respect, and you've got to work things out. And so it's difficult. Rose's personality was different than the other person's personality: very strong, felt strongly about things. So I think the governor found it difficult to deal with her head on on these kinds of problems.

LAGE: Did you anticipate that she would have trouble on the supreme court?

WILLIAMS: Well, I can't really answer the question. I think one of the complaints about her I did anticipate: the court operates under a scheme of collegiality. You do have a chief justice, but you do have equals on the bench who are associate justices. And I think she forgot that quite often. While she was chief, her role was different than she perceived it, and as a result there wasn't the closeness that there could have been between and among the various justices. And then, you know, she is not a harsh or mean or vindictive person--I don't mean that--but she is a strong-willed person who feels strongly in turn about how to do things, and I think she

probably annoyed people who were used to a different way of the chief justice acting.

Of course, then you have a more substantive ground. The court got involved in death penalty cases, and three members, at least, were perceived to be the culprits, and the court was perceived to be deliberately preventing death penalty cases from getting to a final point where a person could be executed. The stories are not always totally correct, like everything in this world, but it did give enough reason for groups to get together and take on the three justices. And you could see it coming at that point. I think her lack of ability to deal perhaps as effectively with people as she should have, whether it be in the administration or in the court, probably didn't help things.

LAGE: I understand you had the key position of being the keeper of the popcorn machine. [Laughter]

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LAGE: Was that really an important . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, you've got to understand that it played some role, because the governor was always worried about what he ate, and he went from one diet to another.

LAGE: What was his concern?

WILLIAMS: Well, he didn't want to gain weight, and eating french fries late at night he found didn't seem to work, and he knew that popcorn was more nutritious. But I always reminded him that his calorie count was based on no oil, and he was always getting oil on the popcorn he ate in my place.

LAGE: It does taste better.

WILLIAMS: It tastes better. In fact, there was a brief period when the governor was pressing for the cultivation of jojoba beans. Jojoba beans produce a very refined oil that's used in oiling wrist watches where you have to do very fine, high tech kind of lubrication. And it's used in shampoos and everything else, I guess. I knew it wasn't poisonous. But he said he had a supply of jojoba bean oil and

would like to try it on the popcorn. I said, "I'll be happy to do it, but you have to be the taster." And he did. He said it was all right. [Laughter] But it was a point where he could walk away from something. Maybe he was getting caught up that he was felt that he was being too tightly scheduled, or if he was en route to a meeting he really didn't want to go to, he'd just stop and have some popcorn. Because he just resisted this idea that someone again has forced me into a meeting.

LAGE: Would he chat then in an offhand manner?

WILLIAMS: Oh sure. It was always general things. "How are things going?" He knew people in the unit and would walk in and get some popcorn, because you could smell it from his office. It would sort of waft down the hall.

LAGE: So you'd make it a few times a day?

WILLIAMS: Oh, sure. We used up two air poppers, and we put oil in them afterwards. Or we had a regular popper--we burned that one out completely.

LAGE: [Laughter] Was it an open office so that people did wander in and out rather than . . .

WILLIAMS: It was open. People wandered in even if the door was closed. [Laughter] No, I never close doors, and the only reason I'm doing it right now is it just keeps the noise down.

LAGE: Right.

WILLIAMS: No, the door was always open. People popped in and out. That's the way we operated. And that was fine with me. That's the way you learn what's going on if people will talk to you.

LAGE: Would others gather there, and was it a chance for informal interchange?

WILLIAMS: Well, people would gather. Some ate popcorn; some didn't. I can't tell you whether it was. . . . It was something that didn't bother me, so I didn't. . . . We always had a lot of food around. Our unit was known as a source of food, so a lot of people would come in mooching food. We'd have to ask them to leave at a certain point.

You know, with pizza. If we're working late at night there'd be pizza or other foods that weren't appropriate, but we always had them. [Laughter]

LAGE: Had you had to work late at night in the other administrations?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes, during the rush period you worked as late.

LAGE: So it wasn't a completely new thing for you to be up until midnight.

WILLIAMS: No, the work is there no matter who the governor is. You just have to work late at night. Happily, it was just a harder way to get things done, but it still, you know, you were on the fly more. You had to follow the governor around and then get relayed back by highway patrolmen or get a flight back or something.

LAGE: To get things signed.

WILLIAMS: Get it signed and get it back to Sacramento in a timely way. You got used to doing it. You got used to the deadlines. You got used to the turmoil, and as time passed it became more regularized. Either you got better used to it or the governor was getting a little more regular.

LAGE: You're not sure which?

WILLIAMS: Well, it was a little of both. And he was, a new process, he really was interested in what. . . . He knew what the secretary of state did in terms of bills, and he certainly knew what our unit did. He knew the people in our unit. I mean everybody. He knew the young lady that worked with me on getting bills chaptered. He knew her, in the sense that he knew what she did.

I remember the first budget year. Again, this is the period of chaos where the Department of Finance is presenting recommendations to the governor for budget deletions. Then it was our job to prepare a letter signed by the governor indicating those items that he wished to either reduce or delete and the reasons therefore, and then we'd deliver it to the legislature. Well, the budget was late in his first year, through no fault of his own, and they wanted to get it out right away. So we were working with the Department of Finance to get it done right. Our staff was waiting

very patiently to do it. They were experts at it, truly expert. And so Gray Davis comes in and says, "Now we're going to get everybody in the office to type on it: the press secretary, everybody." Now this is guaranteed chaos. I mean if there's a.... I mean at the moment it made sense to Gray Davis to get it done in a hurry. He accomplished nothing thereby because it had to be done completely over again.

LAGE: You weren't able to tell him, "No, this won't work."

WILLIAMS: No, nobody told anybody anything. Nobody wanted to listen.

LAGE: Because at that point he wasn't open to suggestion?

WILLIAMS: No, he wasn't open to it. The next year it was simple. These are bright people, and they saw that they'd screwed it up. So what I did is I said, "Just let them do it."

LAGE: Now you're using they. Or he?

WILLIAMS: They. The other people were typing.

LAGE: I know, but who told you to go tell them?

WILLIAMS: Well, the people who normally would have produced the document.

LAGE: Oh, OK.

WILLIAMS: Would have just sat down in tandem and typed it flawlessly. We didn't even have word processors. They were skilled typists. They understood the process and they could check everything. They had now lost control of the work flow.

LAGE: I see.

WILLIAMS: They didn't know who had what. So we gathered up all the paperwork, brought it all back in a pile, and then looked at what had been typed. The few that had been typed right we pasted on a piece of paper, and they typed in the corrections for all the great majority that were done wrong. So what we did was a cut and paste job. Talk about crude. This was with a capital C. But we had to get it done in a hurry, and their job was made doubly difficult because of the mess other people had made. But they went ahead and we Xeroxed the copy. The governor said, "Where's the smooth

copy?" I said, "This is the best you're getting the way we did it this year." He looked at the young lady that had been working on it. She was sitting on the floor against the wall. It was 2:30 in the morning. She was looking up at him. He said, "You look tired." She just looked at him. I'm quite sure if she could have bit his head off she would have.

And after that it changed. It became apparent to these people, who are very sensible, that they weren't using the resources they had to get the job done. So in the second year, the same kind of problem. The governor says, "Everybody go home." I said, "No, governor, you go home. We can't. We're going to now finish it and we'll have it for you in the morning." He said, "I'm sorry. I understand. You folks get some rest tomorrow." And they're sitting there at the typewriters typing away. They knew what their responsibility was. No one else intervened. He did it to be gracious and went home, came in in the morning and signed the document and got the bill filed. But it took one year of chaos to. . . . I mean the first year tended to be more disruptive.

LAGE: Yes, I see. So they did . . .

WILLIAMS: After they figured that out he accepted the role that people play, that he knew that these people could do it better than those people so why try to spread it around?

LAGE: Well, that's a good illustration.

WILLIAMS: At first you don't know what to do. You're operating without a full knowledge of how things work, and secondly, you may have some doubts about the people around you.

LAGE: Right, and you may not have that much respect for the system.

WILLIAMS: Yes. And until you . . .

LAGE: Until you see how it works.

WILLIAMS: Then you get over the hurdle and things go a little better.

LAGE: Well, it sounds like you're a patient man.

WILLIAMS: I'm not sure I'm always patient, but you deal with things. In turn you have to get used to the way other people do it. Nobody's going

to accommodate you. If they just fall in love with accommodating people and the process, they won't get their job done. So we learned to develop techniques to speed up the process and, you know, get things done, and it worked very well.

LAGE: Very good. There are always a few stories about Brown and his vetoes. Do you have some stories about the vetoes? He did a lot of vetoing, as you implied.

WILLIAMS: Well, he did a lot of vetoes initially. It tailed off rather fast and at the end there were relatively few vetoes, both the budget and bills. You've got to remember, the governor was operating with Democratic majorities in both houses. And these are your friends. You're not perceived as the enemy. You're supposed to be helping out the Democrats in getting things done, so it's more difficult I think. The people that are calling you that are mad at you are Democrats. Here with Governor Deukmejian they perceive him as one that's more than likely to veto a bill of theirs, not for partisan reasons but for philosophical reasons.

LAGE: Right.

WILLIAMS: So they expect a large number of vetoes, and they've gotten them. Large numbers of vetoes both in budget and bills.

LAGE: But they didn't expect it from Jerry Brown.

WILLIAMS: They didn't get it after a while from Jerry Brown. I think in the second half of his administration you see far fewer vetoes of bills and budget items.

LAGE: Now when we talked about Reagan you said that the bills that you actually would take into him had either been worked out in the cabinet or else they were kind of nonessential bills anyway.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's correct.

LAGE: Now what about with Brown? Since you didn't have the cabinet, how was that . . .

WILLIAMS: You tried to explain that this set of bills are routine, or affectionately called "no-brainers." That's what they were called. I

mean, they weren't bad bills. They just didn't require a tremendous amount of energy to look at them.

LAGE: Now, would he still look at those carefully?

WILLIAMS: Oh, sure he would. Particularly at the beginning, to call anything easy was just an invitation to find out something wrong with it. But as he gained experience and realized he couldn't spend his life doing this, you could tell him these are easy ones and he would tend to do it, because he had seen them before, seen this kind of legislation. He had now been around the track. The tough ones we'd put more time in.

LAGE: Now the tough ones in the Reagan administration would have been worked out in the cabinet and be fairly routine by the time they came to the governor.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's right.

LAGE: Now what about with Brown?

WILLIAMS: No.

LAGE: Do you recall some specific ones?

WILLIAMS: You've just got to beat it through with him.

LAGE: So you or whoever took it to him, it seemed, would have a more prominent interpretive role.

WILLIAMS: Well, but we tried on major bills, and most of the bills that came at the end were in that category, to have the appropriate individuals there with the governor. Not an army of people. I don't think he was comfortable with having a movie theater full of people, and so as a result, we'd have the director of Finance there, for example; we'd have policy people there to provide information.

LAGE: Do you recall, can you give an illustration? Is there a bill that stands out in your mind at all where you might illustrate the process of his . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, for example, at the end, you have a lot of bills, and we try to put them together, fiscal bills, by subject, and we try to have the individuals ready who, not only would we have the director of Finance there always, because he had a good sense of the policy

and the history of the bill and its fiscal impact short term and long term. And what a director of Finance, particularly Roy Bell, could do--a long-time employee of the department--would say, "Governor, I know you have an interest in supporting some of these bills, and in light of our resources, I can talk to you about this array of bills before you right now, these five or six bills you're looking at all in the same subject area. This is what it's going to cost you short term, long term, and here's the pluses and minuses for each one."

LAGE: Would you have developed some of these pluses and minuses for him?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. But Roy could put it together in an articulate way, and instead of the governor digging through every file, he could say, "Now this is where you're going, and I know you're going to sign a couple of these, and since I can't prevent you from doing it, even though I would prefer you not sign any from a fiscal point of view, here are the ones I think you should consider as your priorities." That's the kind of advice you need. You don't need someone to say, "Well, this bill costs five dollars, this costs ten dollars, and this bill does this or that." It helps the governor not one bit. He's still left with a bunch of jumbled facts, and somebody needs to focus on, "Maybe this would be the best scenario for you if you want to take a positive action in this area."

LAGE: Were fiscal considerations primary then, would you say?

WILLIAMS: No, but they were always there and always have been. The assertion is that over the years either Finance has a great deal of control, too much control, or absolute control. And it frustrates the departments. I'm never sure whether that's ever accurate in a moment, but Finance plays a very significant role at a time when resources are limited and when you have restraints in the constitution.

LAGE: Did they play as significant a role with Governor Jerry Brown as with the others?

WILLIAMS: No, probably a little less so, but he certainly had a lot of ties with the Department of Finance in terms of people he dealt with regularly. Three or folks over there that he knew real well over a period of time and relied on for advice.

LAGE: Did you get a sense over the years of what his main concerns were, something that would help you analyze the bills better or predict how he was going to react?

WILLIAMS: I think you got a sense of it with the passage of time, but I can't tell you there was any one key to the process. You knew what he would say in the State of the State, what he'd say in his budget message, and you'd get a feel for what the governor was about.

LAGE: In observing him as he dealt with these programs were there, with the legislation, were there certain things that really spoke to him, do you remember? You know, certain issues that he seemed emotionally . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, again, if there were things that seemed to be consistent with what he was trying to do, that was easy. After that, some things have been worked out. You know, that process goes on in any administration if you have a cabinet or no. So there wasn't anything new or novel except you had a governor that tended to be a candidate more often. At some periods of time he was always. . . . Either he was running for reelection one year; he was running for the presidency and flying around.

LAGE: A couple of times.

WILLIAMS: And he liked to be on the move, and so you had to chase him around a lot. He did things differently, but he didn't have some philosophical bent that was totally different than anyone else. I think he was perceived as "Governor Moonbeam" by those who probably have adopted some of his ideas since. [Laughter]

[End Tape 4, Side B]

[Begin Tape 5, Side A]

LAGE: You were saying . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, you know, he was espousing the use of satellites for communication in the schools, things that we now don't treat as crazy. The use of computers, more and more computers in the school system, he saw as an obvious need. Things that we take as commonplace today. Some people thought it was sort of strange, more because of the way it was presented than the idea itself.

I think that's what some people commented on after his last unsuccessful effort for the presidency: that nobody was listening to what he was saying because they were spending too much time commenting about the setting in which he was saying it. It may be a light show or the fact that he and Jacques Barzaghi at that moment spent the day visiting a guru in Chicago. While he was in Chicago he said some things that were very important, but the guru visit was what was reported. So the reporters were caught up with Jerry Brown the spaceperson and not Jerry Brown who had issues to talk about, but also visited gurus who had light shows and took advantage of associations with Hollywood people to do these things, and they acknowledged that. Several people said that he had things to say and nobody was reporting it. But that happens too, and maybe that's the fault of somebody who visits gurus.

LAGE: [Laughter] Did you have a sense that the media changed during the period of time that you were in these positions? The media's approach to reporting the governor?

WILLIAMS: Well, it did change. You know, television came on the scene, because we had exciting people on camera, but as you know, the television cameras have virtually disappeared, the full-time people have disappeared, from the capitol. It's perceived by the stations that it isn't worth the effort to have full-time people here, because the people aren't interested in the kinds of things that come out of Sacramento. It's tiring to read about.

LAGE: So you don't have a politically knowledgeable, on-the-scene reporter?

WILLIAMS: The writers who are here know their business, for most of the papers are really knowledgeable and tend to write about everything, but the TV people are the local people. They're here, of course, but they pop in and out. They don't have a full-time staff just standing around. So it's usually the print media that prevails.

LAGE: So that might tend to, on TV at least, have them look at the flashier issues.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and that's what TV tends to operate on, and they acknowledge that. I've heard them say that, not in the context of the capitol, but "That stuff can't just go on; people won't watch boring press conferences."

LAGE: It's probably true.

WILLIAMS: It well may be, I don't know.

LAGE: I just want to be sure we get as good a picture as we can of how the office worked and how Brown dealt with legislation. Do you have any other thoughts or illustrations?

WILLIAMS: Well, again, the fact that he used a different approach that perhaps was more difficult for those that had to manage the paper doesn't make it a bad approach, because I'll make that point with Governor Deukmejian. Again, because the governor wants to be comfortable with the way he does things, not to make staff members comfortable. No matter how tolerant and considerate the individual is, he still wants to do it his way. So if the staff said, "This would be an easier way, Governor, if you just let us do the thinking for you." Fine and dandy, but they're not going to do that. You can get some modification, but you're not going to get much. The governor will say, "Look it, I was elected governor, not you."

LAGE: And they all have that approach, I assume.

WILLIAMS: Well, in varying degrees. And yes, they have enough concern about their decisions. They just don't want to be rubber stamps of staff.

LAGE: Was Brown concerned with, I don't want to say nit-picking because that's kind of pejorative, but small details in the legislation?

WILLIAMS: Oh, he could do that just to prove he'd catch things. And he'd like to draft bills; he'd like to rewrite them and work things out and see a nuance in a bill. He enjoyed that. He liked the intellectual exercise. After a while, after you'd done several thousand bills, it doesn't become too exciting, and in an eight-year term you're looking at an awful lot of bills, a great majority of which are not unimportant, but they're not exciting.

LAGE: Did you ever see veto decisions made on the basis of "I don't like that guy who proposed this legislation"?

WILLIAMS: No. And that's unproductive.

LAGE: That's the story you hear.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's a story, but it's not generally true.

LAGE: You never . . .

WILLIAMS: No, if it were. . . . I can tell you that there was one. . . . I mentioned in connection with Ronald Reagan there was one member you probably could have done it to, but we deliberately did not mention the author's name, because that isn't fair to anybody. The author doesn't conjure these things up. They're usually done by other folks or organizations, and you try to avoid that. Even Pat Brown, as I mentioned, had an author that annoyed him mightily. And he said, "But I can never find a reason to veto it, because the bills are satisfactory bills. As much as I'd love to veto his bills, I'm not hurting him; I'm just hurting someone else." And there's a day when if you've got a doubt maybe you'll resolve it in favor of the veto, but that's unproductive, because on a given day you could veto every bill in front of you then, because at one point in time or another the governor's doing battle with some member of his own party. Witness Jerry Brown's twofold problem with appointments. Other governors never had this problem up to that time.

LAGE: You mean with filling positions in a timely manner?

WILLIAMS: Filling positions requiring senate confirmation.

LAGE: Oh.

WILLIAMS: And the senate was getting rambunctious and restive and concerned about the type of people appointed by the governor. Earlier governors generally got the benefit of the doubt. This governor, of course, is appointing different kinds of people. He's appointing people who are different. He appointed to the bench, for example, more women, more minorities, things that weren't done. It no longer was middle-aged white males getting all the jobs. And that certainly was the case prior to his governorship. Not that there was malice or ill will on the part of any other governor, but that's the way things were done. And now he's appointing people who are controversial in addition to being other than middle-aged white males. I'm not sure what middle-aged means, because there are obviously . . .

LAGE: It changes as you grow older. [Laughter]

WILLIAMS: Yes, but there was a category of people that went into these jobs. He started appointing people who were controversial to the Farm Labor Board, to other boards and commissions, who didn't fit the traditional mold, and they had groups that didn't like them. So pretty soon the governor's having trouble with the people that are appointed, far more than his predecessors. I might add that once the senate found out you could do this, they continued to do it.

LAGE: It seems a trend at the federal level, too.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and George Deukmejian, he gets beat up, too. Not to the degree, because he's not appointing people with extreme views, but he's appointing views that people are having problems. In fact, his people are getting their one year in and they're out. But not the extent that Jerry Brown did, but George Deukmejian inherited the virus, if you will.

LAGE: Were there any other of the agency heads besides Rose Bird that made an impression on you?

WILLIAMS: I had more contact with the directors of Finance and dealt with them a lot, so my impression on a day-to-day basis was more with

them than with Rose Bird or the other agency secretaries. The people generally were well qualified in my mind.

LAGE: A lot of them had that kind of creative and different way of looking at things. I'm thinking of Huey [D.] Johnson in Resources.

WILLIAMS: Yes, Huey's a good point. The governor brought in people like that. They didn't fit the traditional bill. But he got things started, I think, where you have people now who are more concerned with the environment, you know, in any administration. So you get this thought process going, and it works and it pays off, and later Resources secretaries don't find it difficult to follow in that lead, even though their personalities may be different; they may appear to be very conservative and traditional, but they can still be environmentalists. The Business, Transportation and Housing people were all more out of the business community, I mean, but they were out of seminaries, too. [Laughter] One was [Donald] Burns. I saw him the other day. Very delightful, very able lawyer. [Richard] Dick Silberman was over there, and he later became director of Finance and for a period of time the chief of staff.

LAGE: And he's the one who got into recent trouble?

WILLIAMS: Yes. It shocked me. One of the truly nice persons that I've ever worked with. You know, that proves how much knowledge I lack about personal, private existence apparently, but I always respected him and the way he treated other people and the staff and the very polite way he handled his work, and yet he was in charge. It was nice.

LAGE: Was he a capable . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, oh, very bright and able guy.

LAGE: Did he have a powerful role in the . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LAGE: He was chief of staff, too?

WILLIAMS: He was chief of staff. He held several roles. Yes, he had a very powerful role.

LAGE: Was he different than Gray Davis as chief of state?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Very calm and very quiet, very pleasant. Please and thank you. And you know, I think I know who the boss is. The boss can say, "Please, will you do this?" That's a command. That's not a suggestion. Dick would come in and say, "Now I know you're going to be talking to Jerry about these bills, and would you tell him, if you have an opportunity, that I think this approach is a good one on the bill?" It wasn't an effort to do anything wrong and it was always please and thank you. And I always made a note and made sure the governor was well aware of his point of view. But it was always done graciously, and I tried to respond by being very thorough in stating his case.

LAGE: Did he make the office run in a more orderly fashion than Gray Davis had?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. The office by then was running pretty well. People knew their place; people had left that didn't find a job and things were working all right. You know, things do settle down in time, and everybody knows what their job is, and once you know what your job is and who's in charge of what, everybody just does it. So it tends to become more organized. Otherwise, you're in a constant state of chaos, and I don't think you can go for year after year that way. I don't *think* you can anyhow. I wouldn't want to try.

We had some disruptions during the Brown years, and I feel the need to mention them, because they frustrated me and it's typical of what can happen where minor wrongdoing becomes major wrongdoing because of the way you handle problems. We had computergate. When the governor ran for his last effort for president, his campaign farewell was in Milwaukee where they had a light show, and it didn't work. The light show didn't produce the votes. And he and his campaign staff came back. He brought a lot of those people back into the office, and they became--I perceive them as others did--as sort of another group of employees. They saw themselves, I think, entirely as the new rebirth of the governor's office.

LAGE: They were totally new to the governor's office?

WILLIAMS: New people. You might have known some of them but they were back.... They came in and they were put in one job and another.

LAGE: Replacing others?

WILLIAMS: No, no, no. They just were fitted here and there. In some cases they replaced people that had left, but there wasn't any housecleaning. I'm just saying that here they were, and they met separately, and this is crazy, you know. As soon as you see this happening somebody should have stopped it. Then I saw one day a memo that other people saw that was very political coming out of one of our offices in a unit. And you can't do that. You can't use state resources to do this sort of thing.

LAGE: One of your units of...

WILLIAMS: One of these campaign people.

LAGE: I see.

WILLIAMS: Then they found, a reporter found--somebody starts leaking things, as they tend to--somebody I guess found out that somebody was setting up the computers with a list of contributors and political, non-state government things, whatever they were. So they wrote a story about this computer file and some of the political activities by these activists in the office. All it would have taken, I think, is candor. I don't know, candor apparently is against the law on the part of the governor's office and legislative offices. You never admit error; you never admit that somebody has done something that's wrong, and all you have to do is say you'll remedy it. Everybody responded to the computergate, the first story of computergate, and then next there's another story; something else breaks. And another story and another story.

LAGE: Of a similar fashion.

WILLIAMS: And pretty soon now our legal affairs unit is then involved because the FPPC [Fair Political Practices Commission] is now involved, and law suits and legal fees and consternation, and employees were beside themselves because they were being quizzed by

investigators, and they are barely able to function. You know, they can't get their work done because they are now under attack, they feel.

LAGE: Was this happening to you too? Did you get quizzed?

WILLIAMS: No. I knew the reporter, and I said, "How come you're not looking at my computer?" And she smiled and said, "Why should I?" [Laughter] She said, "I know where the dirt is; it's not in your computer." The governor, of course, would have nothing to do with her after that point. But it's a classic case of saying, "Look it, I've just found out what is going on. This is illegal. I have stopped it, and the employees who have done it are no longer in the employ of the state of California." Didn't do that.

LAGE: And he didn't clear out the office?

WILLIAMS: Didn't clear out the office. Some of the people went elsewhere. But it was a self-inflicted wound by someone who didn't consciously do it. It was not the governor's doing. It became the independent action of this little cabal, or big cabal.

LAGE: Who were these people?

WILLIAMS: They were all campaign people. I didn't get along with them so I can't even.... They didn't like me and I didn't like them. I guess my views got back to them. I think you're not serving the governor's interests at all; you're disserving his interests.

LAGE: And you really think he wasn't aware of it?

WILLIAMS: Oh no. No, he wasn't aware. He became aware of it, obviously, when it became too late to really stop it, and people got deeper and deeper into it. Our legal affairs unit, for reasons I'll never fathom, made it more complicated. Again, I don't know why you can't be candid. Just say, "Look it, this is what happened. I have stopped it. You want to come and check? God almighty, I have stopped it. This is bad. This is wrong. It's illegal. I won't tolerate it in this administration."

LAGE: Why do you think he didn't respond like that?

WILLIAMS: Well, because people just, they couldn't cope with it, apparently. No one handled it very well.

LAGE: Who was chief of staff at that point?

WILLIAMS: Gray Davis. Gray was the spokesman. Every day he had a new story. It wasn't in any effort to lie, it just was no one handled it well. And it is a fact, it wasn't handled well.

LAGE: Once you start covering up, you kind of fall into it.

WILLIAMS: Well, when you just can't seem to face up to things. . . . And it's not so much a cover-up; it's just the way you want to respond that gives another story to that reporter. And you don't need to do that. You've got to stop it with the first story and tie a tin can to the tail of those that created the problem for you.

LAGE: So Brown had not done well on the presidency. Was he now looking towards running for senator? Or do you know?

WILLIAMS: Well, he brought people back who probably saw long term some other candidacy out there, and they'd worked hard for him. But they saw their role different than the work-a-day workers in the office who were just doing the job, who didn't see themselves in a political light.

LAGE: Even though this politicking was going on through most of his administration?

WILLIAMS: Yes, but the politicking was going on and other employees are saying, "I don't like it." Because it's illegal. It isn't a matter of good or bad policy, it's wrong. And it is.

LAGE: That didn't happen with Reagan when Reagan was making runs for the presidency?

WILLIAMS: No. No, it's fine if you want to run around and be president, I mean, run and aspire to any other office. It's legal for you to do it, but you have to be very careful what your staff does and what state agencies do. For example, when you're running for another office, you can't use state resources, namely newsletters or other in-house organs to state your candidacy or to put your face on everything suddenly. It's very strict rules from the FPPC. So after

computergate and other blunders--and you make mistakes no matter how hard you tried not to--he said, "Would you check all the things that go out to make sure they meet the FPPC rules?"

LAGE: He asked you to?

WILLIAMS: Yes. For reasons I'll never fathom, but he knew I was straight-laced, and I told him what I thought of computergate.

LAGE: Oh, you did?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I just. . . . And he was a decent person who wasn't trying to do these things, and he was just, I think, hurt that people did it.

LAGE: How did he respond when you told him?

WILLIAMS: Well, I told him that I thought his wounds were self-inflicted, not in the sense that he did it but as a body of employees they contributed, and I meant everybody. I'm not going to go around and say, "I don't think much of how it was handled," but it wasn't handled very well. If somebody thinks it was well-handled, I sure wouldn't want them representing me in a serious matter. So I remember the first thing I learned: that a little newsletter went out, and it had an improper reference to the governor in it, not for candidacy, but under the FPPC rules. I called them immediately and I said, "We have violated the rule as I read it. I'm going to bring it over to you to show you. We didn't intend it; it was done inadvertently and it won't happen again, but it did happen." And he said, "We don't go after people who tell us when they do things wrong. It's when they deny they did things wrong." And I brought it over right away to the chief counsel and . . .

LAGE: Of the FPPC?

WILLIAMS: Yes, because candor works and openness works. It was an innocent oversight, and it was a very minor thing. Better to tell them than have someone else tell them.

LAGE: Was it difficult for you to get a handle on all the FPPC rules, or were they pretty straightforward?

WILLIAMS: Well, I didn't have to worry about. . . . I only had to worry about this one little narrow rule, and I'd mastered that. No, I'm no expert

on FPPC rules today. Our office is, but I'm not. I found that you can be.... You don't have to go around confessing to everyone, but you can certainly be open and [Inaudible].

LAGE: So that works.

WILLIAMS: And it works. People like that. They're charmed by it because no one does it.

LAGE: Well, now you said there was another incident that was a troublesome one?

WILLIAMS: The medfly issue. That was probably something that everybody focused on and continues to use against the governor. The governor listened to the boards of supervisors in those counties, and they didn't want any spraying of malathion in their county. There wasn't any general support for it except from the ag[ricultural] community and [the Department of] Food and Agriculture. So he was trying to be responsive to the elected officials there, in defense of the governor. All that did was convince those that were opposed to him that he was indecisive and couldn't make up his mind about anything. And then he made the decision to spray, and that seemed to upset everybody because he delayed it, and it upset the people because he did it.

LAGE: So you couldn't win on that one.

WILLIAMS: You can't win on that. And even if B.T. Collins was willing to drink the malathion, which he did do ... [Laughter] He's drank worse, I guess. [Laughter]

LAGE: Now was B.T. Collins in the legislative unit?

WILLIAMS: He was in the legislative unit for a period of time.

LAGE: Did he replace Marc Poché or ...

WILLIAMS: No, no, no. He was one of the deputies. Marc Poché hired him from Santa Clara.

LAGE: And how.... He seemed like kind of a character.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. A character, but an able character and a very caring character, contrary to this rough exterior. A very able person who was sensitive to how other people feel, really. A nice person.

LAGE: Were there other legislative secretaries that you worked with after Poché? Any that you want to mention?

WILLIAMS: Well, [Anthony] Tony Dougherty was legislative secretary following Marc Poché. Following Tony Dougherty there was--boy, this is embarrassing; maybe I have mental blocks for people, but we had . . . .

LAGE: We can look these up.

WILLIAMS: No, we had. . . . Oh, Lord, why don't I remember names? I'm going to have to get the name for you. A woman who was a deputy in the office and became legislative secretary [Diana Dooley]. Then [James D.] Jim Neff was the final legislative secretary. I don't mean to be, it sounds sexist.

LAGE: Well, it does. [Laughter]

WILLIAMS: It does. [Laughter] Maybe it was.

LAGE: Were there differences in the way that your job. . . . Did your job change when these people came in?

WILLIAMS: Not too much, but everybody's different. You get used to one person, then you've got to deal with another. It's just that's the way of the world. Nobody was difficult to deal with, however. Jim Neff, at the end, you know, was a holding action. Jim is a very delightful person anyhow and a very caring one. He had to bear the brunt of the last few years. But it was an exciting time and one . . . .

I think upon reflection, people see the governor had some thoughts that were worthwhile, except that they measure people differently. They measure you by some of the things you do, the people you see, the people you go with, and the way you act. If you don't live in a traditional house, and you have a mattress on the floor, or if you go out with Linda Ronstadt as opposed to having a family, that makes you different than other people, obviously. And he comes from a very traditional setting, you know, family and ties and long marriage and real affection one for the other. And here he is, single and living literally in a bachelor pad. It was a pretty nondescript setting, just a dresser and mattress on the floor.

LAGE: And did that fit with what you saw of him?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. He wore monogrammed shirts and expensive suits, and he wasn't trying to pretend that he was a hermit. But, he went back to the apartment building just to sleep. That wasn't a place where you lived. The excitement was over here. Or wherever else you were going.

LAGE: But there was a sense of excitement, it seems, as you describe him. You had described him, I guess, in that McGeorge journal[1] as the most frustrating to work for but the most enjoyable. Is that . . .

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes, because I'm looking at it very selfishly. I enjoyed it because my role was, it was fun. I was involved in things, and he would involve you even though you. . . . If he felt that you could do something useful and in a proper way, you'd do it. And he, like everyone else, was always businesslike and never, *never* suggested that you do anything improper, even infer anything. I mean it was always, "Let's do it the right way." So, but that's just looking at it from a purely selfish standpoint, in terms of your own ego and involvement.

LAGE: The job [under Brown, Jr.,] was a high point of interest, I gather, from what you say, in terms of your role.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and that's my view of the world. It doesn't make him a good governor, a bad governor, or any kind of governor. But in terms of my experience I enjoyed him more.

LAGE: Right. That's what we're trying to get here.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LAGE: Shall we go on to Deukmejian then?

WILLIAMS: Sure.

LAGE: How did things change then, and how did you happen to stay on into that administration?

WILLIAMS: Well, I knew some of the people in the attorney general's office. I had dealt with [Michael] Mike Franchetti, who was involved in the

---

1. "Man Serves Twenty-Five Years in the Governor's Office--And Survives!," *McGeorge Magazine 1990*, p. 24-25.

administration and became the first director of Finance, albeit for a short period of time. I didn't know [Steven] Steve Merksamer, who was the chief of staff and who is the senior partner in this firm. [Rodney] Rod Blonien I knew from the Reagan administration where he was a deputy legal affairs secretary who was going to become the legislative secretary. I talked to him, and so I thought everything had been pretty well worked out.

LAGE: They were just as eager to have somebody who knew the ropes?

WILLIAMS: Well, yes, there's some advantage in having that and having someone in place. You know, I mean that's pretty obvious. I mean, I think it's pretty obvious.

LAGE: How did things change on the changeover?

WILLIAMS: They changed because they have a different way of doing things. I don't say that in a negative way. They just have a different way of doing things, and in so doing my role changed substantially. Where before everybody did enrolled bill reports at the end--because that's the only way to get it done--I was doing them all. And that sort of became a test of how much work could a human being do in a period of time.

LAGE: You mean, under Deukmejian you were given the task of doing all the enrolled bill reports?

WILLIAMS: All of them, because the deputies didn't do it. They did work on the bills, and they worked them out in many cases--they were always significant--but they didn't do it. It just never developed and out of, I guess, stubbornness on my part I wanted to prove I could do it, so I did it. My involvement was substantially different and . . .

LAGE: Was it more the technical aspects?

WILLIAMS: Yes, more technical. And, you know, I think relationshipwise it's always very pleasant, as pleasant as it could be. I can't say this in a negative sense. I'm just again talking about me and my attitude toward the circumstance I had to work in.

LAGE: Did you keep your popcorn machine?

WILLIAMS: I did, because everybody likes popcorn. And so that didn't change, because the eating habits are just as bad in the Deukmejian office as they are in every other office. [Laughter] I mean, in terms of having available food. That's the subject of humor. So there's no change there. But things are more orderly and more carefully done, because it reflects the governor's personality. And so it's not a criticism. It is the way.... If I were governor I'd do things differently.

LAGE: True. And you probably would do them in a more orderly fashion than Governor Brown did.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and so I'm just saying that I enjoyed one administration more than another because of my role, because of the kind of unique circumstances were more enjoyable. But that doesn't make the next one or the preceding one somehow less. Although I enjoyed it, obviously; I wouldn't be there if I didn't.

LAGE: Did Deukmejian tend to go back to Reagan's system of cabinet discussion?

WILLIAMS: No.

[End Tape 5, Side A]

[Begin Tape 5, Side B]

WILLIAMS: There are essential differences between each of the governors I worked for. I did mention earlier that Governor Deukmejian and Pat Brown have many common traits. Not philosophically are they alike, but in terms of work habits: very hard working, experienced persons. They've been in government. They knew what they had to do and they did it, and they did a lot of it on their own, either at their home or in the office, and devoted a lot of energy to that task whatever it might be. But I know legislation more than other things. But to assert that they are alike is not correct either. Their work habits are alike, but their philosophies are not alike, and in fact, Governor Brown [Sr.] alluded to the differences the other day, I think, when he was here celebrating his birthday, and he did

express some criticisms of Governor Deukmejian, mild ones, although they were. It's just that they each do things the way that's most comfortable for them.

LAGE: So personalities affect how the office runs?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and each, by the way, very pleasant people. Jerry Brown tended not to be at times as pleasant. That's just not his personality to go around smiling and patting people on the head or the back. But the others, and including Jerry Brown, were always very pleasant. I can't tell you times when people were offensive. Governor Deukmejian is truly a gentleman, always, and he is that way.

From my experience with him, I can tell you that he runs a very carefully operated operation in terms of schedule. His time and staff time is always planned out very well. The chief of staff runs things. You don't have a lot of people just running around as free agents; you don't have that. But you don't have a cabinet mechanism as you had in the Reagan years; you simply don't. This is my view, but I think I'm absolutely right, the Governor's immediate staff has a greater role in the day-to-day administration of not only the office but what's going on than the cabinet mechanism. That may be a misstatement, but I think I'm right.

LAGE: So if bills were being considered and say it was a major bill, what would be the processing in your office?

WILLIAMS: The governor could be very well talking to the agency secretary but not to a cabinet. They don't come together. The cabinet meets and discusses issues. The staff meets every day; the senior staff meets every day.

LAGE: Who would that include then, the senior staff?

WILLIAMS: Everybody but the office cat. Oh, no. I cannot tell you how they figure out who's on the senior staff. I never made an issue of not being on the senior staff. Every deputy in our office was. The assistant press secretaries were. It was a full house, I'll tell you. They talked about problems, including legislative issues. My

perception is that if you were getting the final word on a subject, there would be consultation with individual members of cabinet, but staff still played an overall more significant role. People would disagree with that, but I think I'm right. That's the difference. Again, strong people play a bigger role than those that are perhaps quieter on the subject. That would be true in a cabinet setting as well, but the governor doesn't use the same mechanism, although he certainly is getting the points of view. That's flowing in, and he will also consult directly with the individuals who are concerned.

LAGE: Now did you have the job of taking things in for signature or veto in his case?

WILLIAMS: None. Most of the bills go to him and he looks at it and then he deals with the legislative secretary or one of the deputies who worked on the bill.

LAGE: So you didn't get that sense of what he was looking at or get questions about how it was drafted?

WILLIAMS: Well, sometimes, but generally not.

LAGE: You had mentioned to me that he was very--again I'm picking up on the word nit-picking--but very carefully looking at wording.

WILLIAMS: Very careful. Careful. Nit-picking is an unfair description, because that isn't how he works. He's a very careful worker. He's not going to be satisfied. Because when I left the office, I had a chat with him. I sense that if you said, "Governor, I'll tell you there's a better way of spending your valuable time, and you should just sit down with somebody and say these are the easy ones, let's do them that way." He'd say, "I can't do it that way. That isn't the way I operate."

LAGE: Did you talk to him about this?

WILLIAMS: Oh, at the end, when I left.

LAGE: Because you felt that he looked too carefully at the nonessential ones?

WILLIAMS: Well, no, no, he asked me the question. I didn't volunteer it. It's really. . . . I sense that this is the way--I don't pretend to be able to

psychoanalyze governors--but this is the way he is. And you would, if you were governor, do it a different way. You know, you've got to be comfortable with your decisions. If you're going to be uncomfortable with them because you feel other people are making the decisions for you and somebody calls you up and says, "Why did you sign that stupid bill? If you'd read it you wouldn't have signed it." So.

LAGE: So he didn't necessarily have an easy pile and a . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, yes, I think that effort is made, but I think George Deukmejian is too careful to make things "no-brainers."

LAGE: He doesn't have no-brainers.

WILLIAMS: Well, but at the end it can be very difficult if you can't push the paper hard, and that's what you've got to do. Now he has met every deadline in a very careful way. I think one year he had a very close call, but he made it anyhow. He's that kind of a worker. He will work the hours that have to be worked to get it done. I have the highest regard for him, not only as a legislator but as a governor. People who thought George Deukmejian's character would somehow materially change when he was sworn in as governor, I think got disabused of that notion, because legislative staff members say George Deukmejian acted the way he acts today when he was on the Judiciary Committee or whatever body he was on that they dealt with. He just hasn't changed. That's his nature; he's a very careful person. That makes him, in the minds of some, stubborn, thin-skinned--name it, you hear those things. But George Deukmejian has been this way since he walked into the assembly chamber. So those that . . .

LAGE: Not unpredictable, like maybe Jerry Brown was.

WILLIAMS: That's right, and I think though, they wanted him to become very pliable. Now, George, you're a former legislator; you should understand this; you're still a member of the club. That didn't happen. Right off the bat, he's at war with the legislature on the budget in '83 and worked out some very difficult problems and

faced that head on. Unfortunately, he's facing it now in his last year--more difficult to deal with. He's not programmatic as such. Most governors recently haven't been. It's unproductive, I think.

He has espoused the death penalty issue. I don't mean as a negative; he was the author of the bill that Governor Brown vetoed and was overridden. He has worked hard in the law enforcement area. He has worked hard in funding education, both K-12 and higher ed, and he has in fact done those things in terms of the percentage of the budget. This is before Prop. 98 [guaranteeing school funding].[1] And he has spent the money. The money's not going back to taxpayers every year; it's been spent. Now we've spent beyond, up to the limit.

LAGE: Too much.

WILLIAMS: Well, too much. That's because we don't have it. I've been working in the fiscal crisis end of things just getting a sense of it, and you know, it's very difficult for the governor in his last year to be faced with the same problem all over again.

LAGE: Are you involved from the outside in that?

WILLIAMS: No, no. This is in-house. We do things for clients. This is nothing to do with the governor. But the issue is one that affects clients' interests.

LAGE: Over these twenty-five years, did you see a change in the balance of power between the governor and the legislature? Would that be something you might have observations on?

WILLIAMS: Well, there's, I think, in the area of appointments the senate as a body will continue to vigorously assert its prerogatives to advise and consent--no longer just to consent. I might add that at the height of Jerry Brown's problems with the senate, Jim Mills and one of his aides came down and said, "Jerry, we'd like to talk. You're having trouble with your appointees. They're hanging out to dry. Can't we develop a process by which we can give you a clear signal without just shooting them down, you know, and then causing that kind of

1. Proposition 98 (November 1988)

ill will and bad feeling?" Bruce Samuel, who was Senator Mills's top administrative aide had suggested a mechanism that's presently in law: if it doesn't happen by a certain date, the person's out of the office; the legislature doesn't have to do anything.

LAGE: Oh, if they don't approve . . .

WILLIAMS: If they don't approve or shoot you down, the inaction, failure to act, is the same as being shot down by a negative vote. So they said, "What about. . . ." Oh, they gave a short period of time. I can't recall; it was more than sixty days. And I said, "What about a year?" The governor's sitting there just glowering at all of us carrying on this debate, because he finds no pleasure in any of it. He's having problems with the very body the pro tem's talking about. They couldn't get him, I think, to totally agree, but they agreed to a year with me. And so I created a problem for not only Jerry Brown but for Governor Deukmejian.

LAGE: So that's the way it got resolved?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and he signed the bill. As a result, some of the people who have been appointed have gone out at the end of a year.

LAGE: Does it work, do you think, that year?

WILLIAMS: It works well enough. Yes.

LAGE: Although it gives you kind of that period where you don't have power.

WILLIAMS: Well, it gives you a year. [Laughter] At least it gives you that, and you don't have the constant battle with the senate taking up your people and shooting them down. That's even worse. And that was happening. It's been happening with Governor Deukmejian. That balance has shifted a little more. The senate now says, "No, our role is different than it used to be." They did that with the [Dan] Lungren appointment [as state treasurer]. That was part of their constitutional authority and they did it, and that aggrieved the governor more than anything else perhaps.

I think the governor's role still is very significant because, while 90 percent of the budget's still locked in, he still controls the

budget process, in that if you have at least a veto-proof one house, you can still get a lot of things done in terms of your vetoes of bills and your vetoes of budget items. Now, if you lose a veto-proof house, like the assembly, where it's veto-proof. . . . The senate isn't in my mind, but I mean it's possible you can get an override in the senate on a given day on a given issue, not in the assembly necessarily. So the governor has been able to maintain his authority through the budget process, through the bill veto process to maintain and exercise his authority. The assembly's here, you know, and the senate's here year round. They have lots of staff. So the legislature's changed dramatically over the years in terms of being a powerful force.

LAGE: The increase of staff has . . .

WILLIAMS: Yes, and having the resources they don't go to the executive branch hat in hand [as they did] before Jesse Unruh and say, "Could you help us? Could you think of some bills for us?" Now they don't need to come to ask anyone.

LAGE: Did they do that while you were in Pat Brown's office, or was it already changing?

WILLIAMS: Oh, it already was changing with Jesse Unruh; he really changed the legislature into a body that was becoming full time, with the resources that you don't find in other states in terms of staff.

LAGE: You're on the State Uniform Laws Commission. What does that do?

WILLIAMS: The Uniform Law Commission has--every state has one--and it was created back in New York state around 1850 where they were trying to achieve a degree of uniformity from state to state in the body of law, particularly related to commerce. The Uniform Commercial Code is a classic case of that. And we have uniform acts relating to commercial transaction throughout the United States now. And we also have uniform acts that we sell, literally sell, to the legislature that makes it easier for people to deal from state to state.

LAGE: I see. Does your commission have a lot of networking with other commissions in other states?

WILLIAMS: Yes, we meet every year in national meeting. It's a labor of love for people. They really put in a tremendous amount of time and effort for nothing. They do it, and they've been doing it for years. They love it. The Uniform Commercial Code area particularly. But uniform rights of the terminally ill, for example, they're trying to get a body of law that makes some sense and get other states to adopt it.

LAGE: And so your commission might find a legislator to sponsor . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, we have two legislators on the commission. Senator [Robert G.] Beverly and Assemblyman [Elihu M.] Harris are members of the commission, so we do have authors, if they agree with the idea.

LAGE: I see, well that sounds like interesting work. Now I noticed that you were offered a judgeship at the end of the Reagan years, and there was even a press release that you were going to become a judge which threw me off your track for a while.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I know. Yes, I changed my mind. I thought about it and upon reflection and stewing night after night about it, not talking to anybody because that's my nature--you just sit there and stew--and I talked to my wife and she said, "It's your decision, you know. You've got to live with your decisions. And if you're going to be unhappy, it makes my life unhappy too, although I think you'd be a good judge." I said, "That may be true, but I'm really going to turn it down."

LAGE: What were your reasons?

WILLIAMS: I just didn't think I'd enjoy it.

LAGE: Municipal judge?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and that's not a criticism of the municipal court. I'm just saying I didn't think I would enjoy it. I can't tell you any more than that; I just felt that way. The devil I knew was better than the devil I didn't know. That's part of my personality. I have to be candid with you. I went and told my mother, who I thought would be

terribly upset because she is from the old country and she likes to talk about her son the lawyer, or her son the judge, I thought, well, that would be even nicer. And she said, "I'm delighted." She said, "I was worried that I didn't think you'd like being a judge." So I said, "God, I pleased somebody." [Laughter] I don't know why she said that. She just said that . . .

LAGE: Well, she had a sense, I guess, as you did.

WILLIAMS: Well, no, I just thought she'd be terribly upset with me, and that worried me more than anything else. But with Jerry Brown, at the end of the administration, B.T. Collins was saying, "Come on, you've got to take a judicial appointment. Don't work for the next bunch." He didn't mean that in a negative way, he just, "Take the judicial appointment; don't wait any longer." There was an appointment available because Judge [ ] Canless had just left the bench and gone back to the district attorney's office. She, unfortunately, then was. . . . I think she thought maybe [she would be appointed district attorney]. She was a chief deputy, very able, but she did not get appointed to the district attorney's job when it became vacant recently, and I think she's left the office. So, things have not worked out as well for her as, you know, you would hope. So he said, "Take the job." And I said, "No, I don't want it." He said, "You can take it without any state bar review again or anything else." And I said, "No." And he said, "You've got to call your wife." He said, "You can't do it without calling your wife." And I called my wife.

LAGE: But you'd already thought about it.

WILLIAMS: So I called my wife and I said--she was out of town--and I said, "I'm telling you this is what happened." She said, "I know. It's up to you." I don't think she ever fully understood me on this issue, but I said, "I'm going to turn it down."

LAGE: Did she think. . . . Those who wanted you to take it, would it have been an easier life for you? A raise in pay?

WILLIAMS: Oh, no. It's a very hard life. Working over there, it's a very demanding court. I had the highest regard for people in there. So don't get me wrong. It wasn't that I was trying to avoid work or to find an easier job. I wouldn't have found it over there. So I figured I'd just go on and finish out what I was doing, and I did.

LAGE: Very good.

WILLIAMS: So, my reasons are not good ones, but I don't have any good ones. I just didn't do it.

LAGE: Well, that's good enough.

WILLIAMS: It's a job that requires a lot of time and attention, and I was willing to do that. It's all do-able; it isn't an impossible job. But the people that got the jobs because I didn't want them all were happy in them and did well. In fact, the person that took my place was the first black municipal court judge appointed and a very able man, who unfortunately passed away not too long ago. And the person who took my place--or had I, well not took my place but took the spot I could have gone to--was then most recently presiding judge in the municipal court and a very able guy. So it's, you know, it's nice to see . . .

LAGE: It worked out for them.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it worked out well for them because that's what they wanted. And that's what you've got to want. I don't think you should be going over there because it's just another job.

LAGE: Then you retired from state service at the age when it was appropriate--is that correct?--from Deukmejian's office.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I retired.

LAGE: You could have stayed longer.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I could have stayed longer. In fact, they would have preferred had I stayed the full next two years. And then somebody else is going to say, "Why don't you stay another four, another eight, or whatever." So you can go forever; there's no end to it. Your retirement allowance gets better and better and better, of course, because you're not ever taking it. You're just running to the point

where the actuarial tables grab you by the throat and you're finished.

LAGE: [Laughter] Right.

WILLIAMS: So, I quit at sixty-plus with thirty-seven and a half years of service, when you count sick leave, and that provides an adequate retirement allowance.

LAGE: And how long before you were approached by Nielsen, [Merksamer, Hodgson, Parrinelo, and Mueller] etc.?

WILLIAMS: I was approached in a proper way at the end of my tenure in the governor's office.

LAGE: By Steve Merksamer?

WILLIAMS: Steve Merksamer asked me if I had any interest in an of-counsel capacity, because I had no interest in full-time employment, not in this office. [Laughter] I wouldn't mind working in a bicycle shop full time, but not in this office. I mean I have the highest regard for people here, and it's a demanding job and it would just be a repeat of what I had before, and so this is. . . . You know, when an assignment comes up I do it, and if there's nothing to do I can go home. And that isn't half bad.

LAGE: That's nice. What about if an assignment comes up and you don't want to take it on?

WILLIAMS: Haven't had any yet, but that's part of the bargain, because I am an independent contractor. If I had to take every assignment then I'd be suspiciously like an employee, and then the tax collector would come after both of us.

LAGE: That's right.

WILLIAMS: So no, I have not found any yet. But I will be taking vacation on my terms and going to Uniform Law Commission meetings on my terms and not on the office's terms, so it works out very well.

LAGE: Now how does this private sector employment compare? How does the functioning of the office and the . . .

WILLIAMS: It's not unlike what I've been used to, and the people are delightful. They're very nice people, all of them very able. Everybody helps

you, so it's been most enjoyable. I knew Steve. I knew his secretary, of course, who came with him. Another secretary in the office I knew very well and worked with. [Timothy H.] Tim Flanigan, who was a chief deputy appointment secretary who is one of the partners here, I knew well. So, you know, it's easy to make the transition.

LAGE: Yes, and how are you using the things you learned and skills you developed over in the governor's office? How do you use those here? Is it similar?

WILLIAMS: Well, it's. . . . You know the legislative process; you know how that works. You know how it works in the governor's office. You know where to get information. You know all the players. I don't lobby--I'm not registered--so I'm just an information gatherer, but I know how everything works and I know where to go to get information if somebody wants to know something. You know, I mean just public information, but you've just got to know where the players are.

LAGE: Yes, so that's mainly your role--information gatherer.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and then I work on a variety of projects and work on legislation. We just finished helping draft legislation for Stanford [University] in connection with the earthquake. That issue keeps stirring up. Authors are not happy with the past legislation, so we're trying to help Stanford out. We so far have been successful.

LAGE: Does state government look any different from the outside?

WILLIAMS: Not really. It really doesn't. I go over to the capitol enough to get information and I see enough people that it's. . . . Many still think I work in the governor's office. I do tell them I don't though, so they won't tell me things that are inappropriate.

LAGE: Well, this has been very interesting. Is there anything else that you want to add, or do you think we've pretty well covered it?

WILLIAMS: I think we have, yes.

[End Tape 5, Side B]

BANC MSS
92/80 c